NARUTO

SHONENJUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Masashi Kishimoto

volume 1

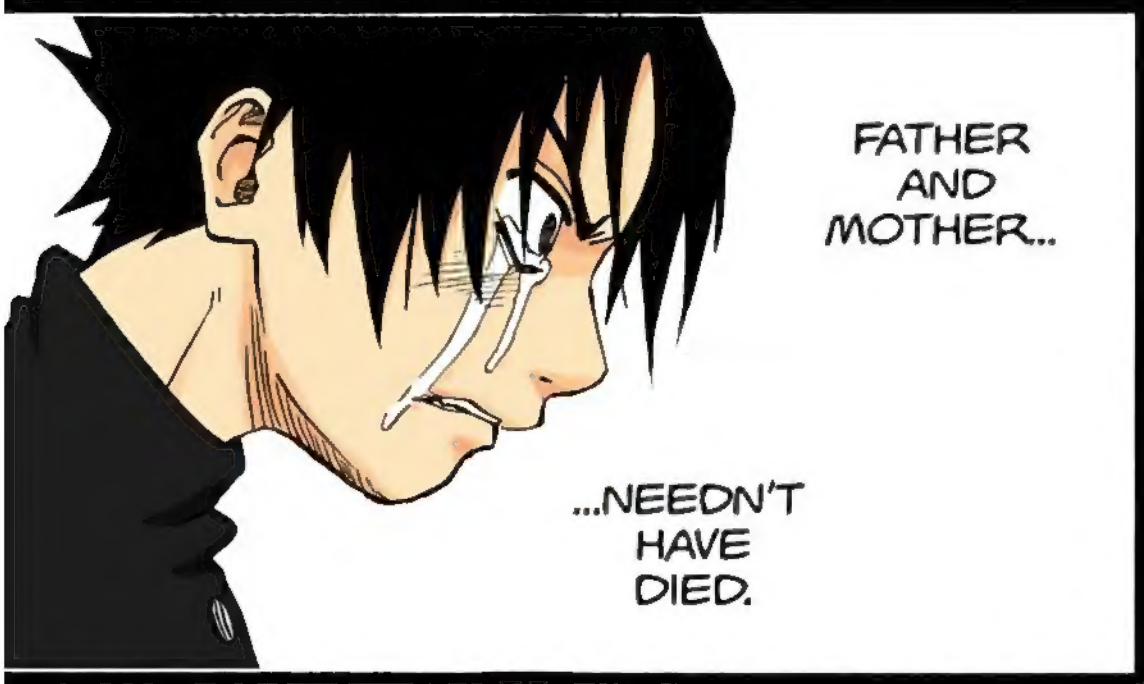
岸本斉史

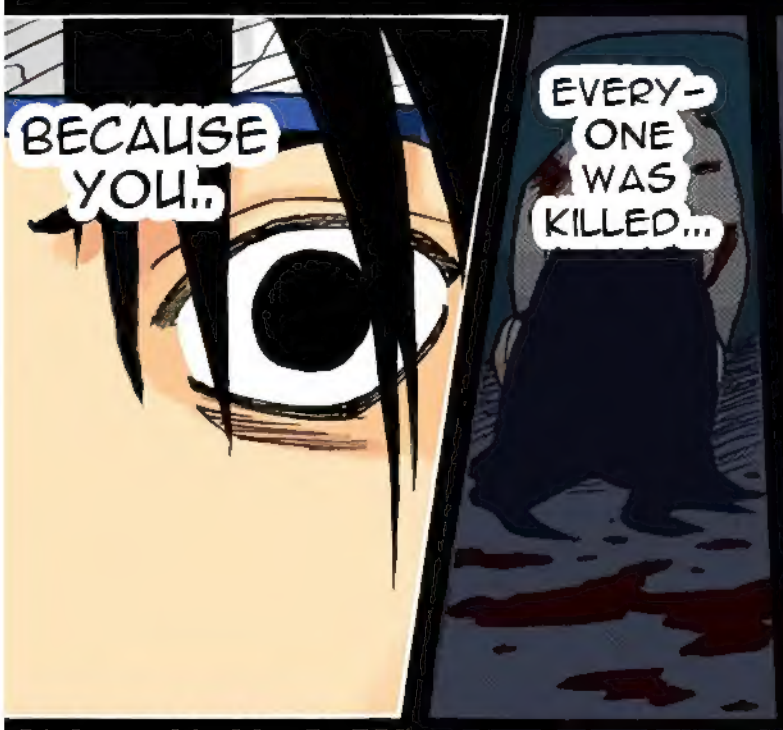
This volume of Naruto is apparently the first to be created entirely digitally. My guess is that, in the future, manga production will continue to move further and further into this kind of production and away from the more traditional methods.
Both the backgrounds and the characters themselves are created in software as polygons, and once the initial design and programming is done, any imaginable composition is possible. For action sequences, we use motion capture to create and manipulate the coolest poses we can come up with. It's all done on the computer, without using any paper or ink. Our methods will probably continue to change as the technology evolves... but there's one thing that won't ever change: the need to invent good stories!

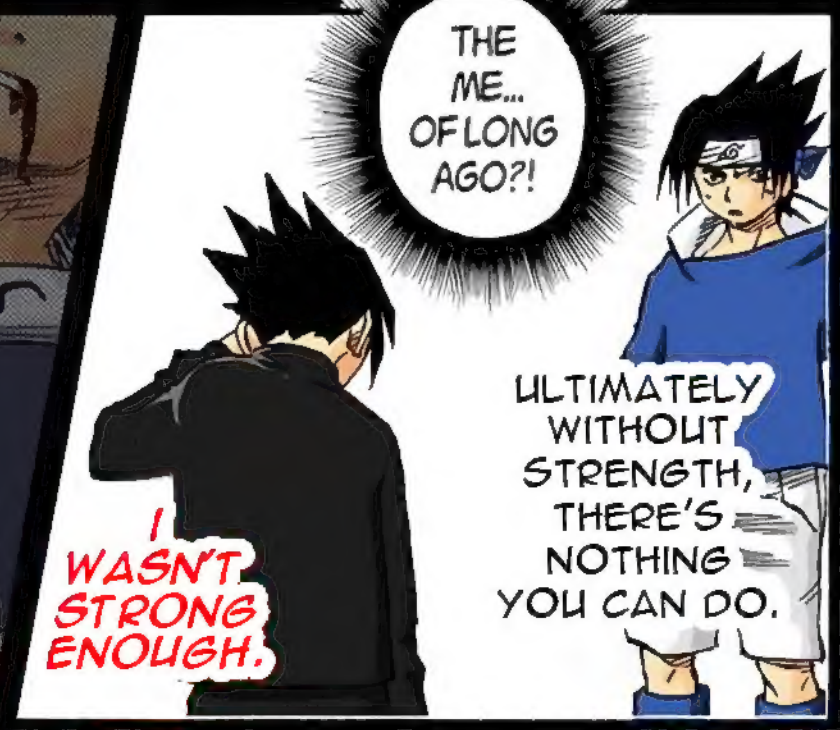
—Masashi Kishimoto, 2001

Author/artist Masashi Kishimoto was born in 1974 in rural Okayama Prefecture, Japan. After spending time in art college, he won the Hop Step Award for new manga artists with his manga **Karakuri** ("Mechanism"). Kishimoto decided to base his next story on traditional Japanese culture. His first version of **Naruto**, drawn in 1997, was a one-shot story about fox spirits; his final version, which debuted in **Weekly Shonen Jump** in 1999, quickly became the most popular ninja manga in Japan.

ナンバー
55 : NO HOLDS BARRED!!







UNH...

ナンバー

55 : NO HOLDS BARRED!!

MORE OF THESE ANNOYING LITTLE BUGS FROM KONOHA VILLAGE HAVE CREPT IN... AND STARTED SWARMING.

ギロ

...AND HOG ALL THE GLORY IN FRONT OF SASUKE?!

DID YOU THINK I WAS GOING TO LET YOU MAKE THE BIG SACRIFICE...

INO...

WHY...?

NOPE! NO WAY. SORRY, BUDDY, BUT THAT'S THE WAY IT IS!

WE'RE THE MEN HERE! WE CAN'T RUN AWAY WHEN INO'S READY TO RISK HER LIFE FIGHTING! NOT EVEN IF WE DIE!!

SHIKAMARU... LET GO OF ME!

WH-WHAT ARE YOU GUYS THINKING?!

THOSE CREEPS ARE TOO DANGEROUS! THEY'LL EAT US ALIVE!!

...FATTY.

HEH HEH... WE'LL LET YOU OFF THE HOOK IF YOU WANT TO RUN...

SORRY I DRAGGED YOU BOYS INTO THIS!!

BUT WE ARE A THREE-MAN CELL... ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL.

WHAT'S MEANT TO HAPPEN WILL, I GUESS!

I... COULD'VE SWORN HE CALLED ME...

WHAT DID THAT GUY JUST SAY?

...FATSO!!

YOU'RE WELCOME TO RUN AWAY... IF YOU CAN FIND A HIDING PLACE THAT'S BIG ENOUGH...

EH?!

THAT WORD'S A BIG NO-NO WITH CHOJI...

IF THIS GUY SAYS IT AGAIN...!

I'M NOT FAT!!

I'M JUST PLEASINGLY PLUMP!!

チーン

KONOHA AND THE SOUND NINJA ARE AT WAR!!

ミョビ!!

DOES EVERYONE UNDER-STAND?! DO YOU GET ME?!

RR ROARR PLEASINGLY PLUMP PEOPLE **UNITE!!!**

バッ

UNREAL!

フラッ

THIS IS TURNING INTO A COMPLETE MESS!

GOOD LUCK!! ♡ CHOJI'S LOST IT!

SHHF

OUR ORDERS WERE TO FIND AND KILL UCHIHA SASUKE UNDER THE COVER OF THIS EXAM, BUT...

...IT CERTAINLY IS.

STAY HERE AND WATCH OVER YOUR TEAM.

RIGHT!!

SAKURA...!

!!

YES, MA'AM!!

THIS IS IT, TEAM INO. UP AND AT 'EM, FULL SPEED AHEAD!

BAIKA-NO-JUTSU! ART OF EXPANSION!!

OKAY!!

IT'S ON YOU, CHOJI!

INO-SHIKA-CHO BOAR-DEER-BUTTERFLY FORMATION!!

THE ART OF EXPANSION: A SECRET SHINOBI SKILL PASSED DOWN TO MEMBERS OF THE AKIMICHI CLAN. THIS TECHNIQUE ENABLES A NINJA TO TEMPORARILY ENLARGE PART OR ALL OF HIS OWN BODY. IT'S USE REQUIRES THE EXPENDITURE OF AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF CALORIC ENERGY.

FOLLOWED BY KONOHA-STYLE PHYSICAL ART THE *NIKUDAN SENSHA*, OR HUMAN JUGGERNAUT!!

ゴロロロロロロロロ

WHAT KIND OF FREAKIN' ART IS THAT?!

!

ZANKUHA! SLICING THE AIR!!

ズゴゴゴ

JUST A FAT GUY ROLLING HIMSELF AROUND!

HMPH!

!!

FLYING?! HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?!

ハングング

MAYBE ULTRA-SONIC WAVES?!

IF THAT THING HITS ME I'LL BE PULVERIZED!

WITH THAT KIND OF ROTATION... SO MUCH FOR AIR PRESSURE!

DARN!!

ノバッ

SINCE YOU'VE BEEN THE BIGGEST PAIN IN EVERYBODY'S ASCOT...

OH, NO YOU DON'T!

バッ

ART OF ME-AND-MY-SHADOW!!

IT'S HIS SHADOW!

TAK

!!

I... CAN'T MOVE! WHY IS THAT?!

ガロッ

AUGH!!

ズザザザザ

ドガ

ザッ

!?

WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING AT A TIME LIKE THIS?! DOSU!

!?

WHAT THE...?!

KAGEMANE-NO-JUTSU: THE ART OF ME AND MY SHADOW. SHIKAMARU'S HALLMARK TECHNIQUE WHERE HE JOINS AND ATTACHES HIS OWN SHADOW TO THAT OF HIS OPPONENT FORCING HIS ENEMY TO MIMIC EVERY MOVE HE MAKES! HE CAN DO THIS ONLY BRIEFLY AT ANY GIVEN TIME.

INO! THE WOMAN IS THE ONLY ONE LEFT.

WHOA.

フラ.

ハ°ラ

SHINTENSHIN-NO-JUTSU! ART OF THE VALENTINE... A TECHNIQUE OF ASTRAL PROJECTION WHEREBY INO CAN TEMPORARILY TAKE CONTROL OF HER OPPONENT'S BODY, HEART AND SOUL!!

YOU GOT IT, SHIKAMARU! TAKE CARE OF MY BODY WHILE I'M GONE! ♡

GOTCHA!

-URP-

MAN, THAT MAKES MY HEAD SPIN!

ヒバニ

BOTH OF YOU, LEAVE YOUR SCROLLS HERE, AND GO FINISH THE EXAM WITHOUT THEM.

IF EITHER OF YOU MAKES A MOVE, YOUR TEAMMATE KIN IS AS GOOD AS DEAD!

WHEN I CAN NO LONGER SENSE EITHER OF YOUR CHAKRAS, I'LL RELEASE KIN!

YOU'RE FINISHED!

WHAT DO THEY THINK IS SO FUNNY?

ミヤ

ミヤ

!?

NO!!!

THEY'RE GOING TO--!!

!!

AIEE!!

AGH!

ズゴッ!!

!!

INO...!

DRIP

ドカッ!!

ACK!!

...NOR HAVE WE ANY INTEREST IN PASSING YOUR INFANTILE EXAM.

OUR OBJECTIVE IS NOT SOME STUPID SCROLL...

YOU UNDER-ESTIMATED US... BAD MISTAKE.

...TO WOUND YOUR OWN COMRADE!!

...WH-WHAT UN-BELIEVABLE LOWLIFES...

!?

!

!

!?

WE'RE AFTER SASUKE!

YOU'RE DESPICABLE!

AND AS FOR THE ART THAT GIRL IS USING... FROM THE LOOK OF THINGS, IF WE INFLICT ANY HARM ON HER HOST, HER REAL BODY SUFFERS AS WELL!

HEH HEH... WE CAN KILL HER BY KILLING KIN OURSELVES!

!

BLAST...

I'M ALMOST AT MY TIME LIMIT!

SO... YOUR LITTLE TRICK CAN ONLY WORK FOR FIVE MINUTES AT A TIME?

!

SIGH

YOU BUCOLIC NONENTITIES THINK YOU'RE ALL THAT JUST BECAUSE YOUR SONIC POWERS...

...WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO WHUMP THESE NOVICES!

!

!

!

!

!

WHAT?!

AGAIN, THE VERMIN COME CRAWLING FROM THE WOODWORK!

LOOKS LIKE YOU BLEW IT, HUH?

LEE...

UNH...

THE KID WITH THE MOE HOWARD HAIRDO BELONGS TO US.

THOSE ARE LEE'S TEAM-MATES...

.....

キッ

YOU HURT HIM, SO NOW YOU HAVE TO ANSWER TO US!

!!

HIS EYES SEEM TO PENETRATE EVERYTHING

!!

HUH?!

THE CHAKRA I'M SENSING...

...OR WE'LL GIVE YOU EVERY-THING WE'VE GOT!

STOP WHILE YOU STILL CAN...

.....!!

WELL...

...WHY DON'T YOU STOP POSTURING AND START DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT?!

HEH HEH... IF YOU FIND US SO DESPICABLE...

?

...WE WON'T HAVE TO.

...FROM THE LOOK OF IT...

SASUKE! YOU'RE AWAKE!!

!!

ムク・・

IS THAT... SASUKE?

.....

.....

.....

!

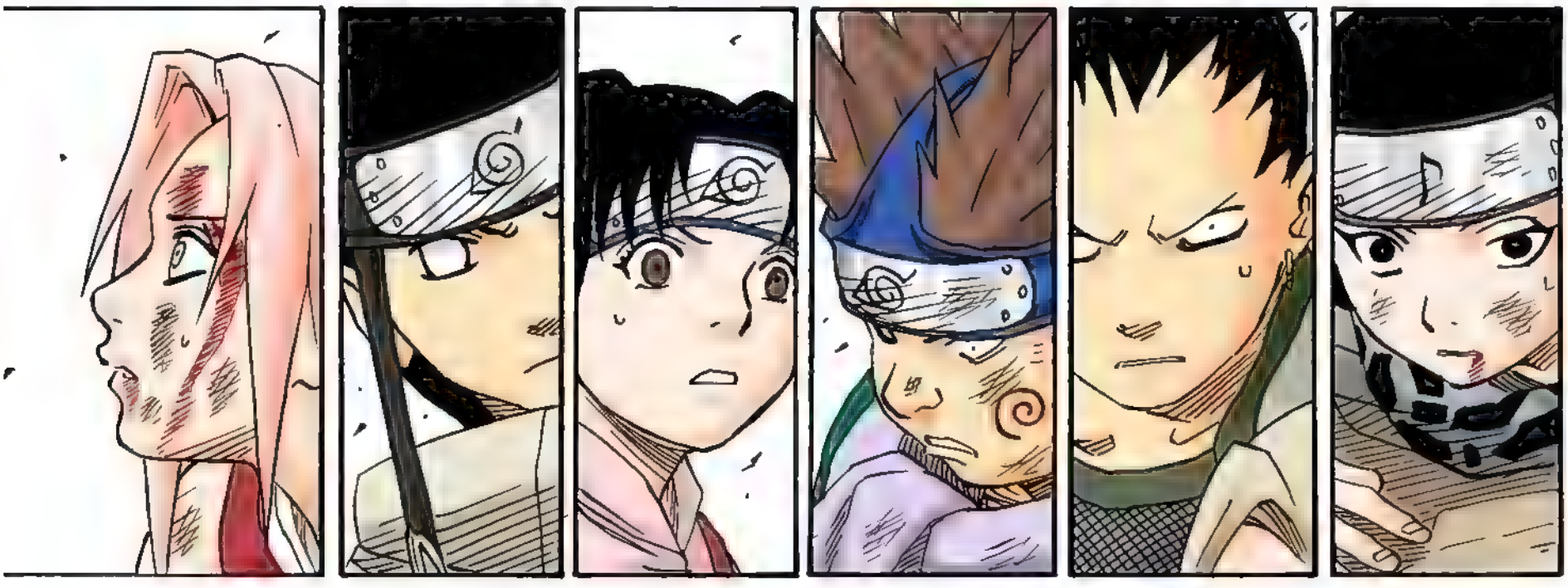
!

HUH?

...POINT OUT THE ONES WHO PUMMELED YOU INTO THAT STATE!
SAKURA ...
IT WAS US!
THE ENERGIES OF THE CURSE... THEY'RE WORKING THEIR WAY AROUND HIS ENTIRE BODY!!
.....
WHO WAS IT?!
.....
SASUKE ...

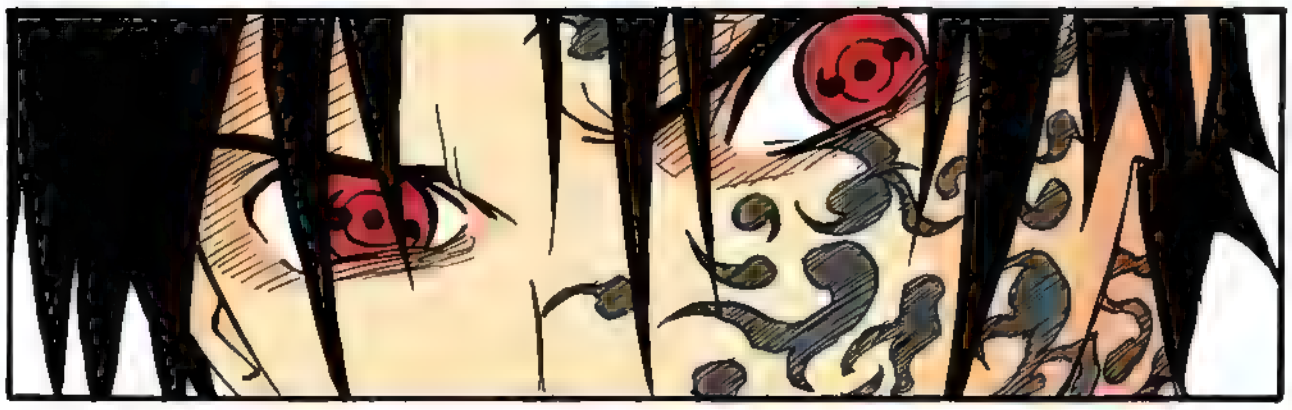
ナンバー 56：

THE STRENGTH THAT IS GIVEN!!



YOUR BODY...?!

SASUKE...



...BURSTING WITH POWER!

I FEEL FINE... STRONG...

NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

I UNDERSTAND NOW.

I AM AN AVENGER...

HUH?

I GOT IT FROM HIM.

ON THE PATH I WALK, I HAVE TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GAIN POWER..

...EVEN IF IT MEANS SELLING MY FLESH TO THE DEVIL!

HE'S CHANNELLED AND MIMICKED IT...

AND ACTUALLY MADE IT TO HIS FEET!

JUST AS I THOUGHT... THE SPELL MARK ON HIS NECK THAT LITTLE SAKURA WAS BLATHERING ON ABOUT, IS THE MARK OF THE CURSE HE WAS PLACED UNDER...

IT WAS YOU.

SO...

!!

HUNH?

GRR!

KAI! RELEASE!

AW, MAN!!

CHOJI, LET'S GET MOVING! IT'S TIME WE GOT OUT OF HERE!!

INO! IF YOU STAY IN THAT FORM, YOU'LL BE DRAGGED INTO THIS!! GET BACK TO YOUR OWN BODY!

UNNH... UNH!

!

WELCOME BACK!!

GOOD!

UNNH...

ゴゴゴゴ

THAT'S...

!

SNAP OUT OF IT, DOSU! JUST BECAUSE HE REFUSES TO DIE...

!

TOO LARGE FOR HIS BODY TO CONTAIN, EVEN AFTER WE!

HIS CHAKRA'S IMMENSE!!

!!

ZAKU, NO!!

DON'T YOU GET IT?!

SUPERSONIC AIR-SLICE!!!

ゴゴゴゴ

ズズ

EEK!!

AGH!

HAH!

BLEW THAT PIPSQUEAK TO BITS.

WHAT PIPSQUEAK IS THAT?

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

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!!

HE'S FAST!

AND STRONG ENOUGH TO LIFT BOTH OF THEM AT ONCE!

ﾄﾞｶ

ACK!

FIRE STYLE-- ART OF THE DRAGON'S BREATH, PHOENIX TECHNIQUE!

ｸﾞｰｸﾞ"

!!

!!

ゴオオオ

WHAT?!

!!

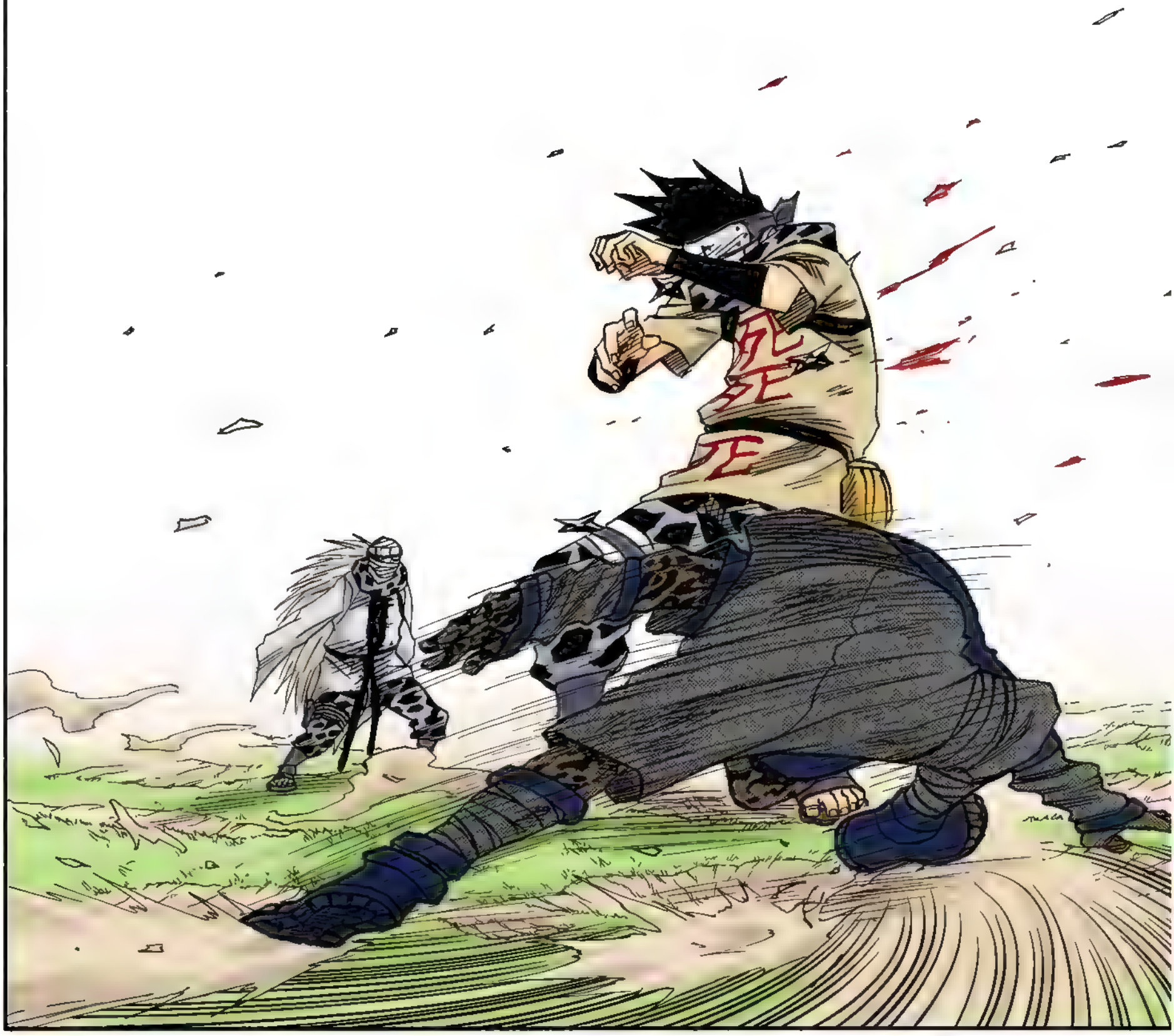
YOU'RE GETTING OVER-CONFIDENT!

I CAN JUST BLOW THESE OUT!!!

スラッ

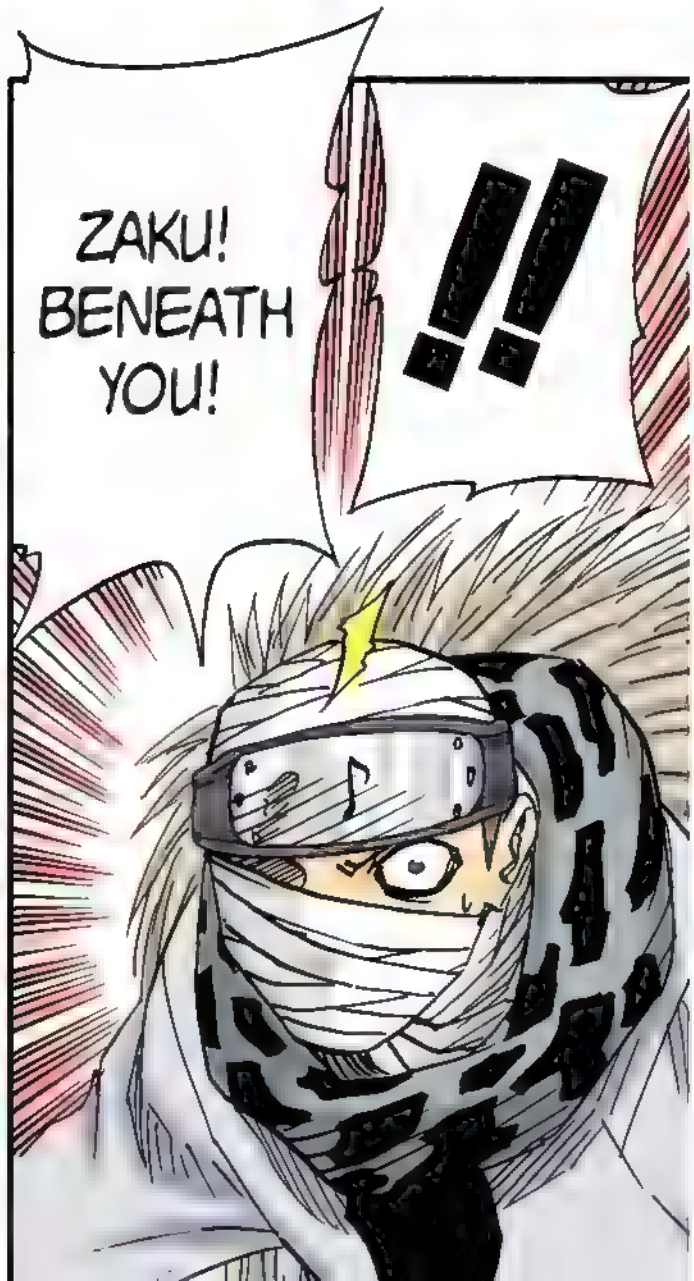
AIEE!

THERE ARE SHURIKEN WITHIN THE FLAMES!



HUNH?!
パシィ

!!
ドカ


ZAKU! BENEATH YOU!
!!

OWWW...!

FF

IS IT REALLY SASUKE?! WHAT ON EARTH HAPPENED TO HIM?

SASUKE'S CHAKRA IS COMPLETELY UNLIKE WHAT IT WAS WHEN WE WERE IN SCHOOL TOGETHER!

.....

HEH...YOU TAKE SUCH PRIDE IN YOUR ARMS... TIME TO BID THEM FAREWELL.

!

REST ASSURED, SASUKE WILL COME TO ME...

!!

ガッ

ガッ

……!!

AAAAARGH!!

ドキ

ゴキッ

!!

!!

!!

...THAT WAS...

U-UNNH...

AND THEN THERE WAS ONE.

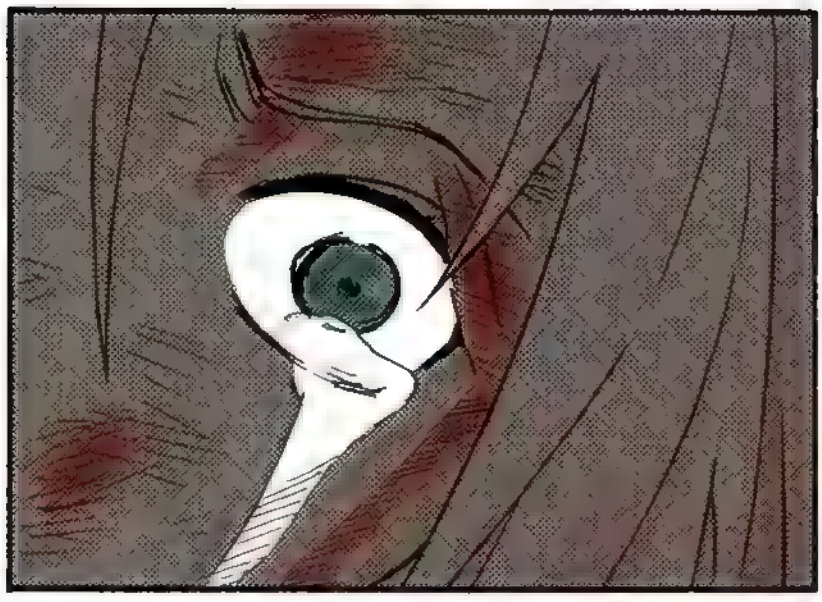
THAT'S ...

!!

I HOPE YOU'RE MORE OF A CHALLENGE.

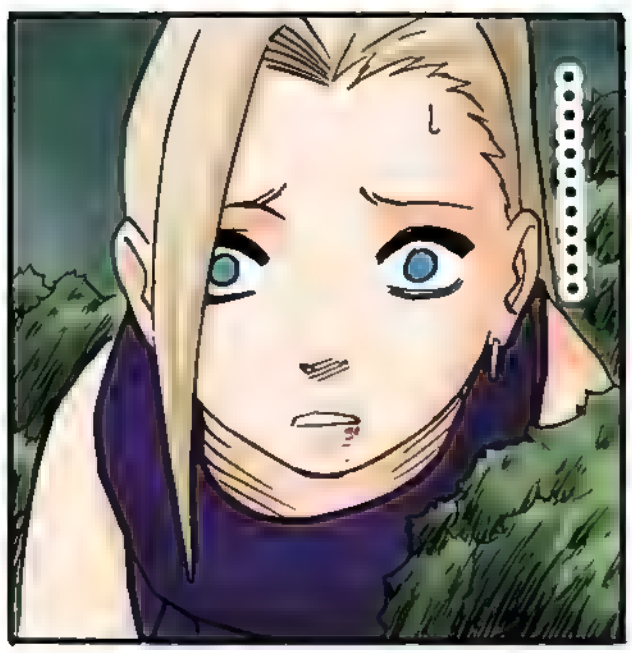
THAT IS NOT SASUKE!

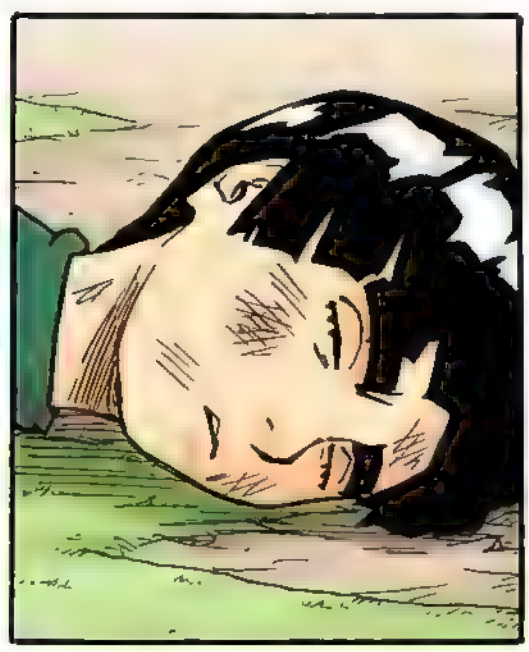
STOP IT!

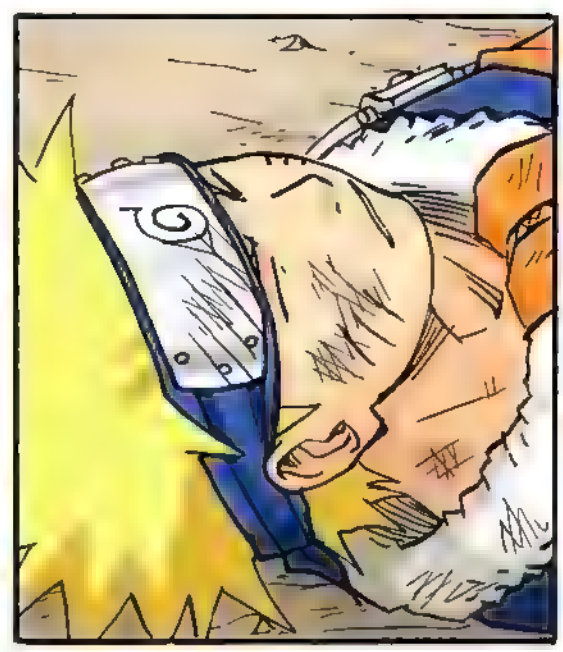


PLEASE...

...PLEASE, STOP...







スッ…

SASUKE!

OHHH!

WE ARE SAVED FOR NOW.

...THE MARKS OF THE CURSE ARE FADING ...

...IN YOUR CURRENT STATE, WE HAVE NO CHANCE OF DEFEATING YOU, SASUKE.

OBVIOUSLY...

!!

!!

YOU'RE PRETTY TOUGH!

ｷｭｯ

ｱｯ

UNH...

I GIVE YOU MY WORD, ON BEHALF OF US ALL, THAT IF YOU LET US GO NOW...

...THEN THE NEXT TIME WE FACE YOU, WE WILL STAY 'TIL THE BATTLE IS DONE, NO MATTER HOW POORLY WE FARE!

...AND ALLOW US TO LEAVE IN PEACE. AFTER WHAT WE'VE DONE, IT MAY SEEM A LOT TO ASK...

...BUT SOMETHING BIG IS AFOOT THAT MERITS FURTHER INVESTIGATION AND CONFIRMATION!

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS IS A TOKEN OF MY ADMIRATION...

...AND AS SOME REPARATION FOR YOUR TROUBLE...

TAP

HUF

HUF

HUF

!

WAIT!!

スタ

スタ

AND... WHY WAS SASUKE THE ONE HE CHOSE?!

YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME! WHO IS OROCHIMARU?

WHAT DID HE DO TO SASUKE?!

YOU ORDERED US TO MURDER SASUKE BUT YOU GOT TO HIM FIRST!

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?!

AND INSTEAD OF KILLING HIM, YOU MARKED HIM WITH THAT CURSE!

WE WERE JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS.

I DON'T KNOW...

.....

死

I HAD NO IDEA THE UCHIHA CLAN WERE SO STRONG...

THAT CHAKRA'S NOT NORMAL.

HEY! ARE YOU ALL ALL RIGHT?!

I HOPE IT'S NOT AN IMPOSITION, INO, BUT I'M LEAVING LEE IN YOUR CARE.

SASUKE...

WHAT... HAPPENED TO ME...?

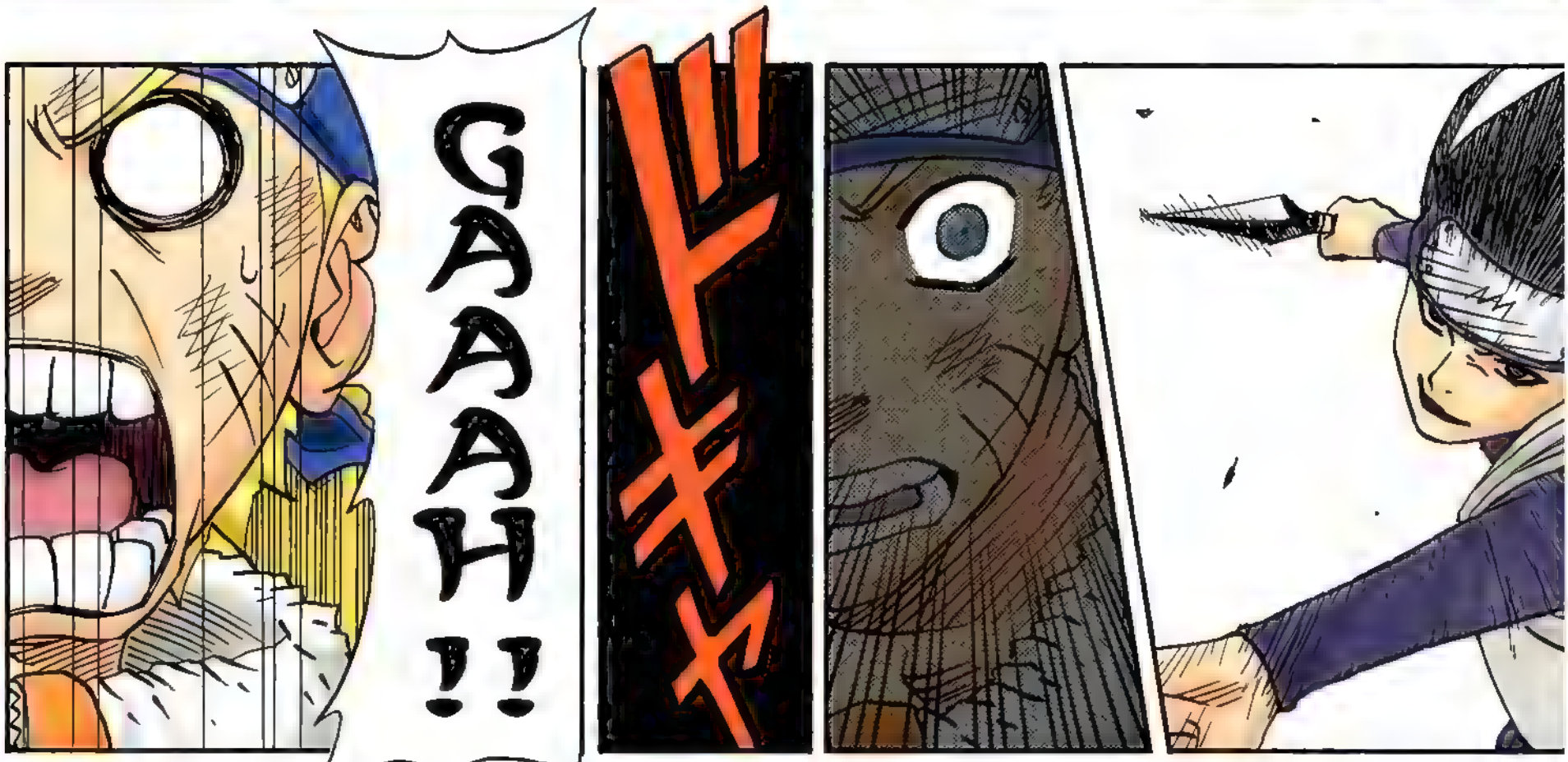
OH! OH! CAN I?

SO WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE?!

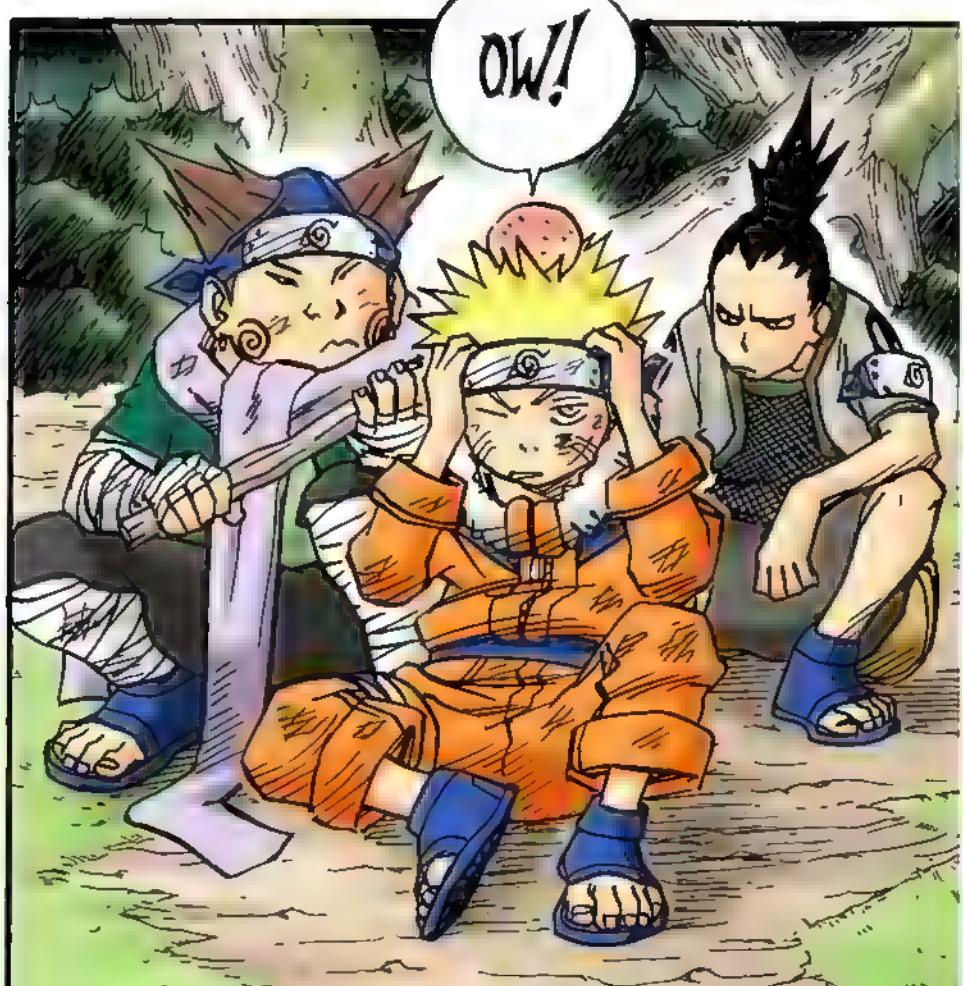
SHALL WE KICK HIM UNTIL HE'S AWAKE?!

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME, SAKURA. I'LL PROTECT YOU!

ナンバー
57：10 HOURS EARLIER...


GAAAAH!!

!


OW!

キョロキョロ

WHERE'D HE GO...?

……!

EVERYBODY, GET DOWN! NOW!!

NO TELLING WHERE HE IS!!

ズズッ..

ピョン

POKE

!!

THE IDIOT... HE'S FINALLY WAKING UP!!

!

!

NARUTO...

……

DON'T HAVE ANY IMPULSE CONTROL AT ALL, DO YOU?

HEYYYY!! SAKURA!!

HUNH?

ぎゅ ぎゅ

WHAT?

JUST WATCHING YOU PISSES ME OFF!

WHAT NOW?!

!

I WANTED TO UPDATE MY IMAGE!!

A NEW LOOK!

SAKURA... YOUR HAIR!!

OH!

UM... YOU MEAN THIS?

HMMM...

LONG HAIR IS FUN, TOO... AND I REALLY LIKED HAVING IT...

...BUT LET'S BE REALISTIC. WE'RE IN THE FOREST, FIGHTING ENEMIES, MOVING FAST... AND THIS IS SO LOW-MAINTENANCE!!

.....

.....

-;SIGH;-

EXPLANATIONS ARE SO TEDIOUS!

...AND WHY ARE THEY HERE?!

WHO ARE ALL THESE GUYS...

HMPH...

THESE GUYS SAVED OUR BUTTS.

!

LOOK AT SAKURA, BLUFFING WITH THAT COY SMILE... AS IF WE DON'T KNOW WE'D BE DEAD WITHOUT HER AND SASUKE!

LET ME TAKE HIM FROM HERE.

TENTEN? WHEN DID YOU GET HERE?

HUH?

WE CAME TO RESCUE YOU!

WHA...?!

LEE! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?! PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!!

OH...

.....

SASUKE SCARED THEM OFF!

...HUNH...? WHERE DID THE OTONIN SOUND NINJA GO...?

IF LEE HAD FACED THOSE GUYS BY HIMSELF, WITH NO DISTRACTIONS, HE COULD HAVE TAKEN THEM!!

OH, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!

LOOK AT YOU! YOU'RE A MESS!

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, GOING OFF HALF-COCKED LIKE THAT, ALONE?!

S-SAKURA NEEDED ME! SAVING HER WAS MY SACRED DUTY... AS A MAN!

!

I KNOW YOU! THE UNIBROW!!!

HEY!

!

YOUR WORDS ARE SO SHARP, IF I TRY TO ANSWER BACK, I'LL CUT MYSELF!

YOU'RE AN IDIOT. YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT?

しゅん..

LEE!!

ACK!!

DON'T YOU TALK TO LEE LIKE THAT!!

!

HE'S ONE OF LIFE'S NATURAL-BORN SUPPORTING PLAYERS... A GUY WHO COULDN'T EVEN CUT IT AS THE STAR OF HIS OWN LIFE.

...OR OF HIS OWN COMIC!

NARUTO IS LIKE THE OLYMPIC CHAMPION OF CLUELESS-NESS!

DID THEY ALL ...

GO CRAZY WHILE I WAS UNCONSCIOUS?!

ALL!!

MY SKILLS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL.

THANKS TO YOUR HELP, I'VE MADE SOME KIND OF BREAK-THROUGH.

!

LEE... THANK YOU.

IT WAS SASUKE!

!

...I AM NOT WORTHY!

うる うる

SAKURA.

LEE WAS BEATEN SENSELESS?!

WHAT?!

...THAT HE COULD ROUT THOSE SAME OTONIN WHO BEAT ME SENSE-LESS.

IT SEEMS SO NATURAL...

...THAT A MEMBER OF THE RENOWNED UCHIHA CLAN WOULD BE THE ONE WITH POWERS SO INCREDIBLE...

!

SAKURA...

WERE THE OTONIN REALLY THAT STRONG?

I... DON'T GET IT.

?

THE FIGHTING LOTUS OF KONOHA VILLAGE WILL GROW AND FLOWER AGAIN!

I SWEAR IT!

BEFORE WE MEET AGAIN, I WILL HAVE BECOME A STRONGER MAN.

HF

.....

YEAH!

.....

.....

I'LL HELP YOU TRIM YOUR HAIR.. TO EVEN UP THE ENDS!!

.....

!?

OH, SAKURA! IF YOU'D LIKE...

Hm...

WELL, AREN'T YOU SWEET?

...ACTING LIKE YOU JUST HAD TO HELP SASUKE... SO YOU'D HAVE AN EXCUSE TO HUG HIM... BILLBOARD BROW!

THAT WAS A CHEAP TRICK...

WHAT CAN I SAY? YOU SNOOZE, YOU LOSE, INO... YOU PORKER.

BY BIRTH... AND BY HIS OWN ABILITIES... HE'S A FORMIDABLE FOE.

UCHIHA...

SASUKE...

AND ABOUT 10 HOURS EARLIER THAN THAT (AROUND 8:00 PM ON THE FIRST DAY IN THE FOREST)...

!

HUF

HUF

ガサ…

ガルルル

ガルルル

I DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR THIS!

HUF

PUF

RRROWWR!

THE ART PARAL-YSIS!

TH-THIS LOOKS LIKE--

?

!!

FANCY MEETING YOU HERE, ANKO!

-SIGH-

YOU TWO MUST BE THE SLOWEST-MOVING COVERT OPERATIVES I'VE EVER MET!

UNH...!!

AW! DON'T BE LIKE THAT!

HUF

HUF

PUF

!

PUF

HEY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT...?

HUF

PUF

37

THE MARK OF THE CURSE WE'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT HAS FLOATED TO THE SURFACE.

BUT DON'T TELL ME THAT IT--?!

NO... GO TO THE TOWER..

IF HE'S HERE, WE HAVE TO BRING YOU BEFORE LORD HOKAGE, SO YOU CAN REPORT IT TO HIM!

スッ

OROCHIMARU? REALLY?

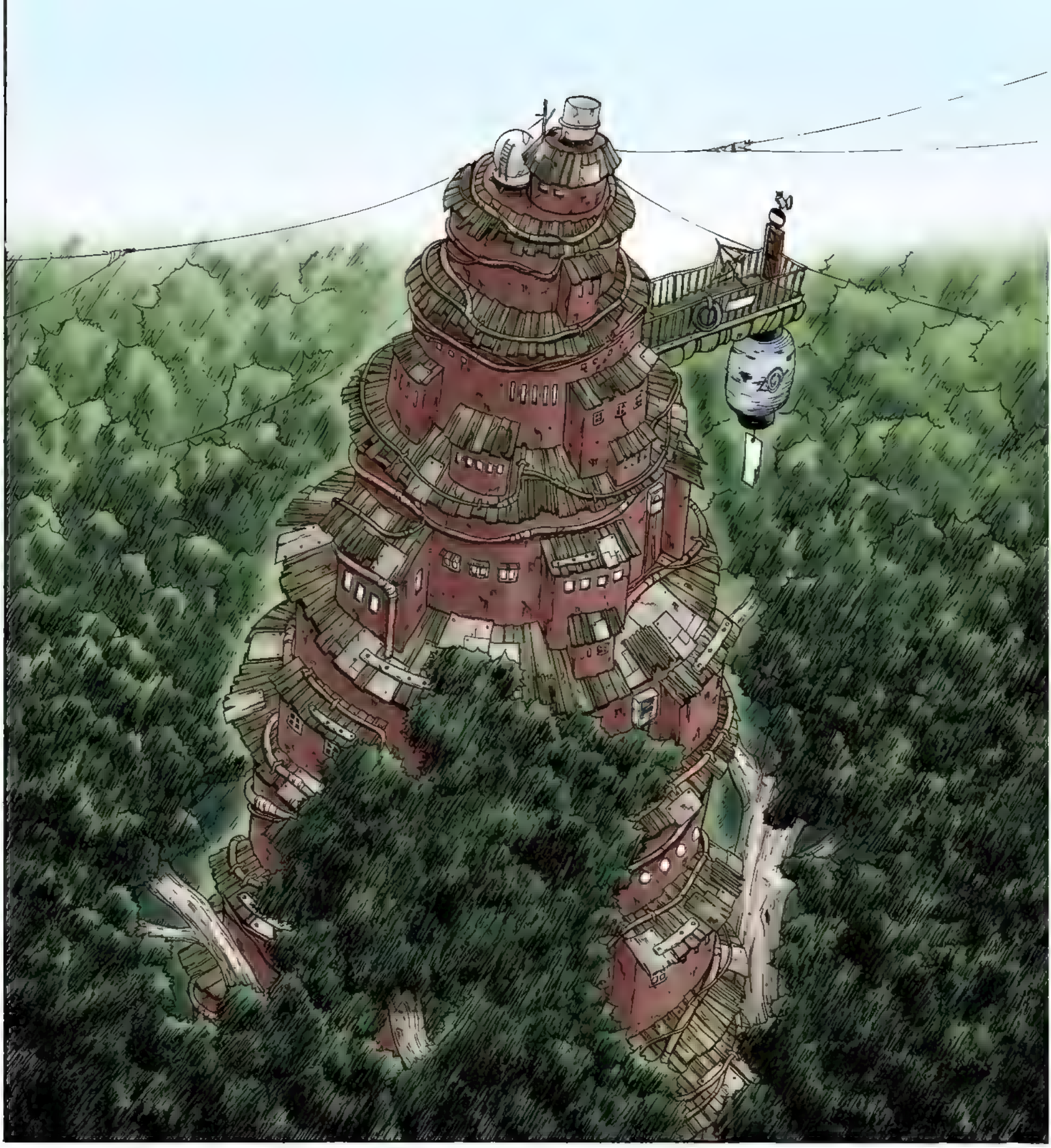
ASK LORD HOKAGE TO JOIN US THERE AS WELL...

TRUST ME... I'LL EXPLAIN WHY WHEN WE REACH THE TOWER.

IF OROCHIMARU REACHES OUR VILLAGE, A STATE OF EMERGENCY WILL BE DECLARED!

YOUR LITTLE EXAM IS THE LEAST OF OUR WORRIES!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!



WHY?!
BUT THE EXAM MUST GO ON!!
WHAT'S HAPPENED IS A DISASTER..

WE'RE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING VITAL!

NOW WHAT?!

OBSERVE!!

ズッ

THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU RIGHT AWAY...

！

ガラッ

THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE HERE, ANKO!

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE, EH?

!?

THAT LOOKS LIKE...

！

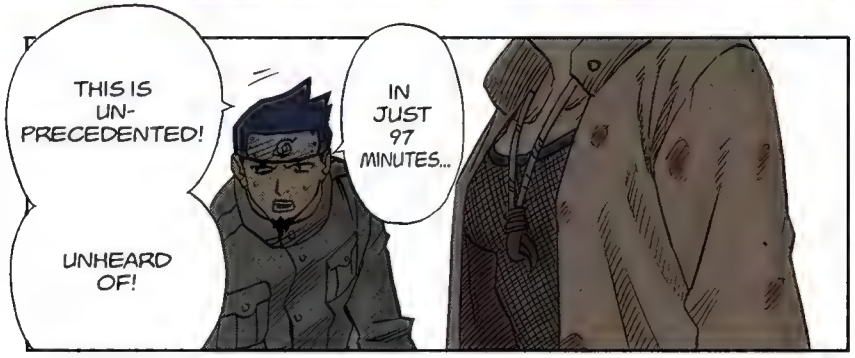
16:09

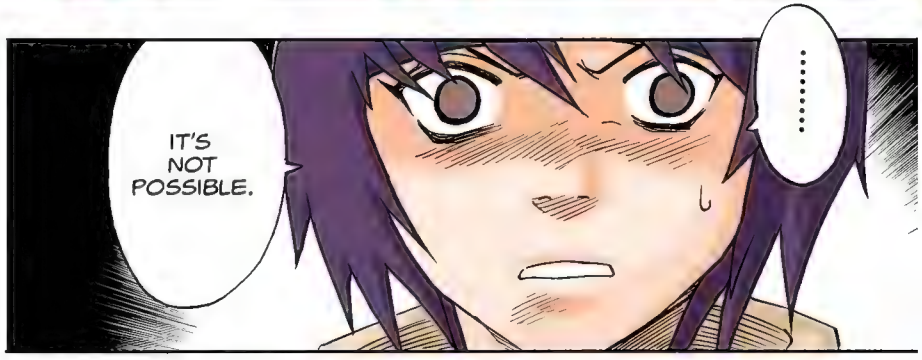
IT IS. IT WAS SHOT FROM THE INTERIOR OF THE TOWER... A MERE HOUR AND 37 MINUTES AFTER THE SECOND EXAM BEGAN!

ズッ

RIGHT THERE... NOTICE THE TIME AND DATE STAMP...

THE THREE NINJA FROM THE LAND OF SAND...
...HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED THE SECOND EXAM.


THIS IS UN-PRECEDENTED!
UNHEARD OF!
IN JUST 97 MINUTES...


IT'S NOT POSSIBLE.
.....

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赤丸
3ヶ月

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赤丸

ナンバー 58：WITNESSES!!

!

IT'S MORE THAN THAT...

PUF

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THOSE THREE HAVE FAR EXCEEDED THE SKILLS OF MERE GENIN JUNIOR NINJA!

THEY'VE BEATEN THE PREVIOUS RECORD BY OVER FOUR HOURS!

.....

...WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

ESPECIALLY THIS BROWN-HAIRED BOY WITH THE TATTOO...

WHAT ABOUT HIM...?

...AND THEY'VE STROLLED THROUGH IT LIKE IT WAS A DAY AT THE BEACH!

...THEIR PATH FILLED WITH HAZARDOUS TERRAIN, POISON INSECTS, SAVAGE BEASTS...

IT'S ROUGHLY 10 km FROM THE GATES WHERE THE STUDENTS BEGAN THE EXAM TO THIS TOWER...

DON'T YOU SEE IT?

...HUH?

!

OH, I GET IT! THAT'S AMAZING!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?

!?

LOOK AT HIS CLOTHES... HIS BODY...

.....

OH...!

...AND NOT SO MUCH AS A SMUDGE ON HIS CLOTHES!

THERE'S NOT A MARK ON HIM ANYWHERE...

EVEN FOR ME OR FOR ANY OTHER JOURNEYMAN-LEVEL NINJA...

...A FEAT LIKE THAT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE!

BACK TRACKING EVEN EARLIER FROM THE TIME INDICATED ON THE VIDEO SURVEILLANCE TAPE...

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE SEEN SUCH A PROMISING CANDIDATE.

BUT HE'S GOT A NASTY LOOK IN HIS EYE...

THIS MUST HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIS INNATE TALENTS!

DAY ONE, APPROXIMATELY 50 MINUTES AFTER THE START OF THE SECOND EXAM...

WE'LL BE CELEBRATING AT THE TOWER IN NO TIME!!

WE REALLY LUCKED OUT... THE FIRST PEOPLE TO FALL INTO THE TRAP WE SET WERE CARRYING THE EARTH SCROLL WE NEEDED!

...DON'T WE, AKAMARU?!

WOOHOO!! SURVIVING IN THESE WOODS IS AS EASY AS I THOUGHT! WE RULE...

WOOF!!

THESE WOODS ARE CRAWLING WITH ENEMIES, YOU KNOW!

CHILL OUT! IT'S WAY TOO EARLY TO CELEBRATE!

...MAYBE SHINO HAS A POINT, TOO!

B-BUT... BUT...

I GET IT... BUT HOW YOU ALWAYS MANAGE TO TWIST EVERYTHING AROUND UNTIL IT RELATES BACK TO INSECTS AMAZES ME!

AND, JUST FOR THE RECORD, I AM STILL THE LEADER OF THIS TEAM!

ALL RIGHT, ALREADY!

WHEN IT FEELS THREATENED BY EXTERNAL DANGER, EVEN THE SMALLEST INSECT WILL ALWAYS--

NARUTO... I HOPE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT...

.....

ALL RIGHT, HINATA! FINE!!!

HOLD IT!

!

HEY!

!

SNIF

SNIF

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SNIF SNIF

!?

!?

SURE... I'LL TAKE A LOOK.

...MAYBE HINATA SHOULD CHECK OUT WHAT'S AHEAD OF US FOR THE NEXT KILOMETER OR SO. CAN YOU DO THAT?

IF WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ENEMIES AND POTENTIAL DANGERS...

BYAKUGAN! THE ALL-SEEING EVIL EYE, HEREDITARY TRAIT OF THE MEMBERS OF CLAN HYUGA!

スクープ

I THINK IT'S... AROUND SIX PEOPLE...

IT LOOKS LIKE... SOMEONE'S IN A FIGHT...

HUH?

LET'S GO TAKE A LOOK!

!

!

KIBA... WHAT WOULD THAT ACCOMPLISH?!

THE MORE EXTRA SETS WE GRAB, THE FEWER WILL BE LEFT FOR THE TEAMS STILL OUT THERE...

...AND MORE TEAMS WILL FAIL!

TO PASS THE EXAM, WE WERE TOLD TO STEAL AND DELIVER A COMPLETE SET OF ONE HEAVEN SCROLL AND ONE EARTH SCROLL.

NO ONE SAID WE COULDN'T STEAL MORE THAN THAT IF WE WANTED TO!

THAT GUY'S SO UNPLEASANT, EVEN A BUG WOULDN'T BITE HIM!

NOW COME ON!!

ALL I WANT IS FOR US TO GO AND LOOK.

IF THINGS SEEM TOO DANGEROUS, WE'LL GO ON OUR WAY!

...B-BUT...

WHINE

プル プル

RUSTLE

RUSTLE

WHY HAVE WE STOPPED?

WH-WHAT'S WRONG?

...WHAT IS IT, AKAMARU...?

!

ハッ ハッ

プル プル

WHOEVER'S UP AHEAD... THEY'RE NO ORDINARY FOES.

HE CAN SMELL THE MAGNITUDE OF THE ENEMY'S STRENGTH, SO...THE FACT THAT HE'S THIS SPOOKED IS A BAD SIGN...

HE HAS THE ABILITY TO SNIFF OUT AN ENEMY'S CHAKRA.

WHIMPER

SOMETHING SPOOKED AKAMARU!!

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WH-WHY...?

LIFE

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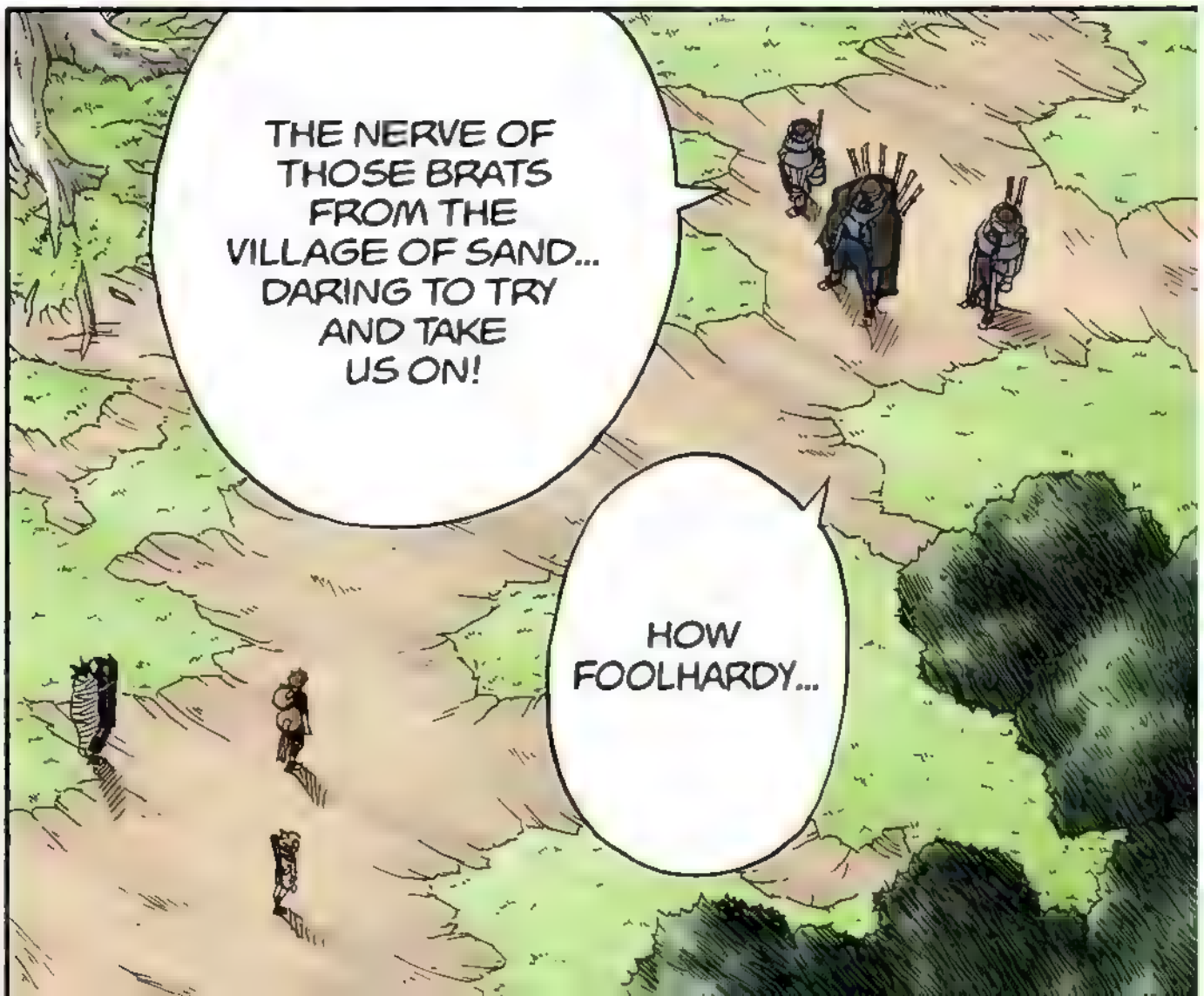
THE NERVE OF THOSE BRATS FROM THE VILLAGE OF SAND... DARING TO TRY AND TAKE US ON!
HOW FOOLHARDY...

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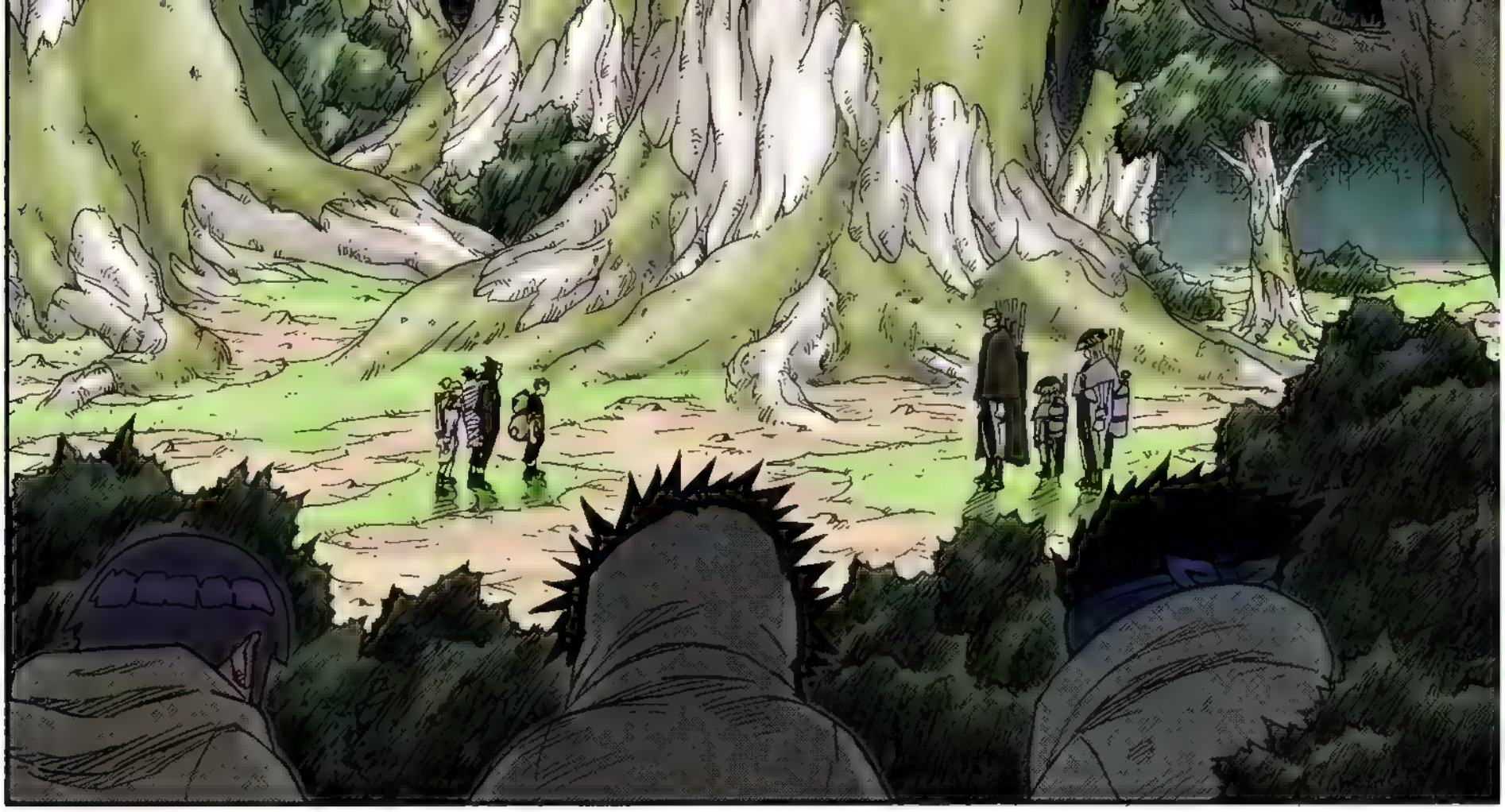

WH-WHAT IS IT, AKAMARU...?!

:WHIMPER:

WHAT IS HE THINKING...?!

LOOK AT THAT LITTLE WORM, TRYING TO TAKE ON THOSE GUYS!

TH-THEY ALL SEEM DANGEROUS... AND STRONG...

WHAT'S HE SAYING, KIBA?

HE'S MOST FRIGHTENED OF THE BIG ONE... VERY DANGEROUS!

ピク！

...EVEN IF YOU WOW THEM BACK IN THE VILLAGE OF RAIN!

ARE YOU GOING TO FIGHT US... OR TALK US TO DEATH? WE DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM FOSSILS LIKE YOU...

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR MAKER!

HEY, GAARA! I THOUGHT WE HAD AGREED WE WOULDN'T FIGHT ANYONE UNTIL WE FOUND OUT IF THEY HAD THE SCROLL WE NEED!

MAYBE SOMEONE ELSE HAS ALREADY AMBUSHED THEM... AND NOW THEY DON'T HAVE EITHER!

I CAN'T TELL WHETHER THIS GROUP HAS THE HEAVEN SCROLL OR THE EARTH!

!

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT!

WE SHOULD ONLY FIGHT IF THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE GAINED!

THERE'S NO POINT IN ATTACKING IF WE CAN'T PROFIT BY IT...

ANYONE WHO CROSSES ME...

...IS DEAD MEAT!

I HATE IT WHEN HE GETS LIKE THIS... HE'S SO CREEPY!!

!

!!

!?

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SOUNDS GOOD TO ME!!

READY OR NOT... HERE I COME!

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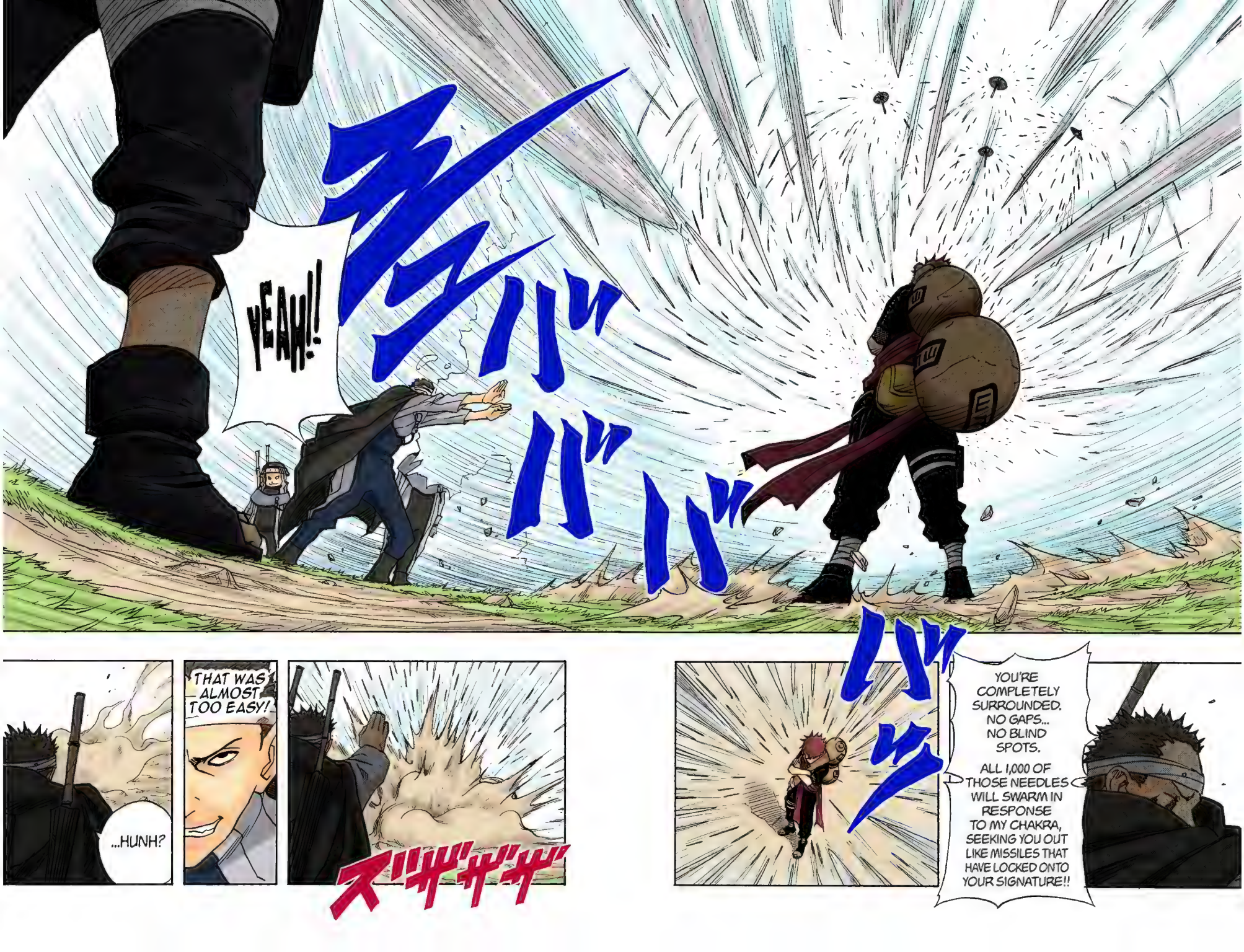
SHINOBI ART JYÔRO-SENBON!! "IT'S RAINING NEEDLES FROM HEAVEN!"

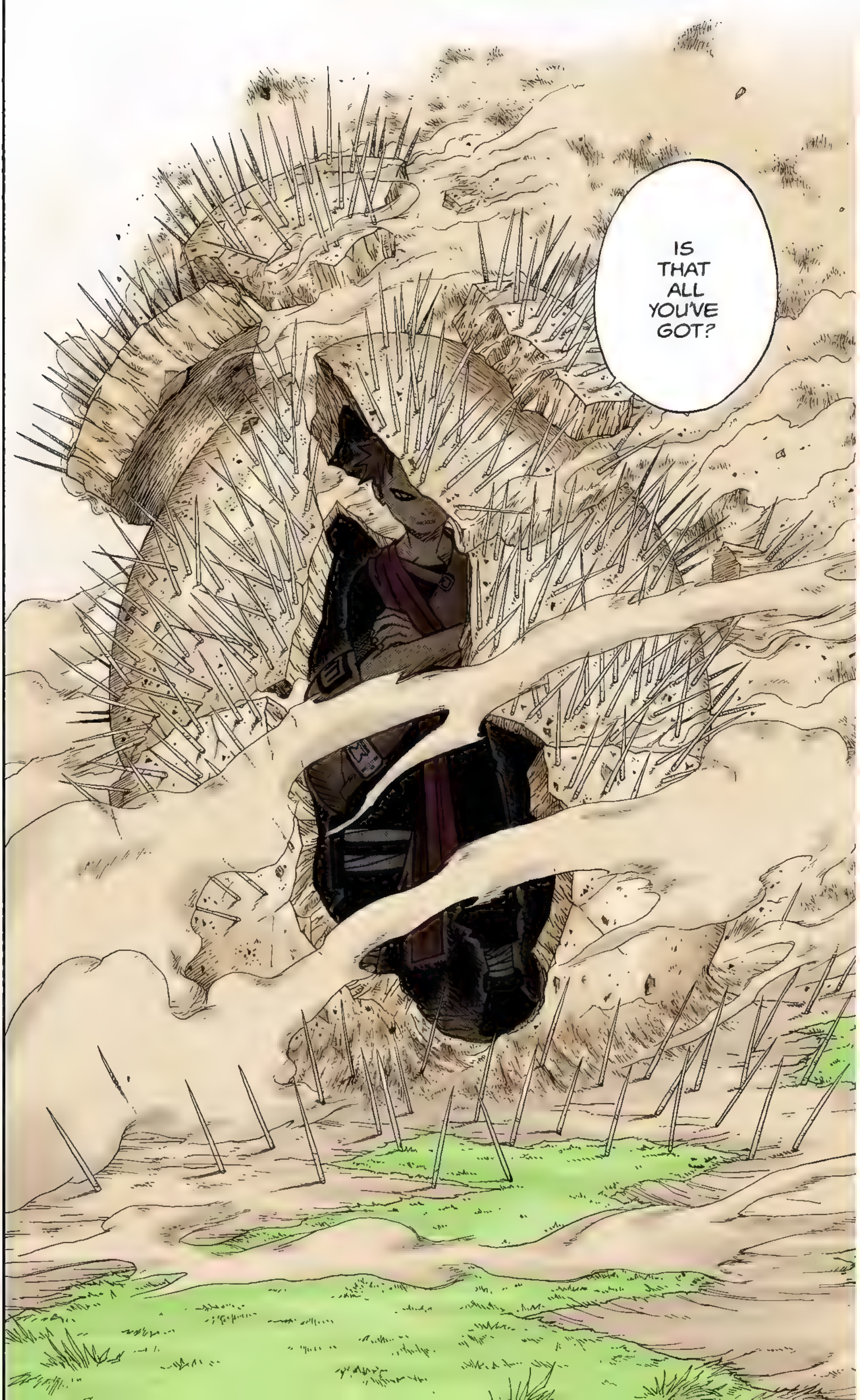
YOU'RE DEAD, KID!!

THE PARASOLS ARE SPRING-LOADED WITH FLYING NEEDLES!!

!!

パシュシュ


YEAH!!
ミシバババ
...HUNH?
THAT WAS ALMOST TOO EASY!
スサササ
YOU'RE COMPLETELY SURROUNDED. NO GAPS... NO BLIND SPOTS.
ALL 1,000 OF THOSE NEEDLES WILL SWARM IN RESPONSE TO MY CHAKRA, SEEKING YOU OUT LIKE MISSILES THAT HAVE LOCKED ONTO YOUR SIGNATURE!!


IS THAT ALL YOU'VE GOT?

IMPOSSIBLE... NOT ONE NEEDLE...

NOTHING TOUCHED HIM!

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ACK!!!

A DOWN-POUR OF 1,000 NEEDLES, EH?

WELL, IT'S MY TURN...

...TO RESPOND WITH A DELUGE OF BLOOD.

A TRICK LIKE THAT IS USELESS AGAINST GAARA...

IT WAS YOUR BAD LUCK THAT HE'S THE ONE YOU WOUND UP FACING.

ナンバー59：THE TRAGEDY OF THE SAND!!

サラ

IT STINKS OF BLOOD.

サラ

...AN IMPENETRABLE DEFENSE!!

EXACTLY. INFINITELY MALLEABLE...

A WALL OF SAND...?

AH--!

...INDEPENDENT OF HIS WILL.

サラ

サラ

EVEN MORE REMARKABLY, IT IS DONE WITH NO CONSCIOUS EFFORT ON HIS PART. IT HAPPENS WHEN HE NEEDS IT TO...

...THEN MANIPULATES IT INTO THE SHAPE HE NEEDS AND RENDERS IT UTTERLY SOLID.

ONLY GAARA HAS EVER MASTERED THE ART. HE DRAWS THE SAND WITHIN THE SPHERE OF HIS OWN MASSIVE CHAKRA...

THOSE NEEDLES SHOULD BE ABLE TO PIERCE EVEN A FIVE-MILLIMETER THICKNESS OF TEMPERED STEEL!

N-NO... WAY...

ANY FRONTAL ASSAULT ON GAARA...

...IS DOOMED TO FAIL!

愛

YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO TOUCH OUR GAARA.

OHH...

BLAST!

SHUT UP, YOU--!!!

FINE. IT'S YOUR FUNERAL.

愛

SABAKUKYÛ! THE COFFIN OF CRUSHING SAND!

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...I CAN'T MOVE...

UHN-!

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AS YOU SEE, GAARA HAS TOTAL MASTERY...

...OVER THE SAND ON THE GROUND... AND IN THE AIR AS WELL..

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BUT YOU'RE HARDLY WORTH IT.

バッ

IF YOU DON'T STOP YAPPING, I'LL SEAL YOUR LIPS... AND CUT OFF YOUR AIR.

スゥ..

I CAN FREE MYSELF... E-EASILY... AUGH!!

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SABAKUSÔSÔ!
IMPLODING SAND FUNERAL!
!!
バ"ヵ
バ"ヵ
バ"ヵ
ポヵ
AIEEE!!
ポヵ
ポヵ
!!

I USED FAR MORE FORCE THAN WAS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT.

IT'S QUICK... AND PAINLESS.

ビチャ

...BESTOWING EVER-GREATER POWER UPON THE DEMON GOD.

BITTER, CRIMSON TEARS FLOW FROM LIFE-LESS EYES AND MINGLE WITH THE ENDLESS SANDS...

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PLEASE... JUST LET US GO!

HERE... TAKE THE SCROLL...

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SHOVE

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NOOOO!!

AIEE!!

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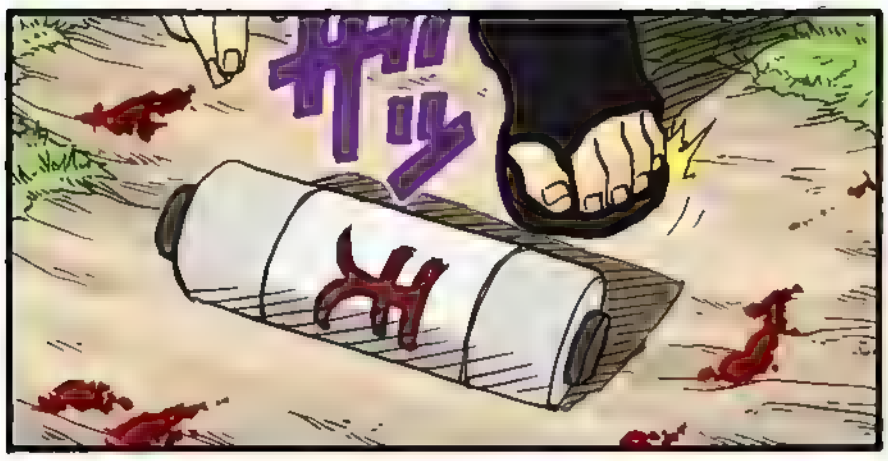
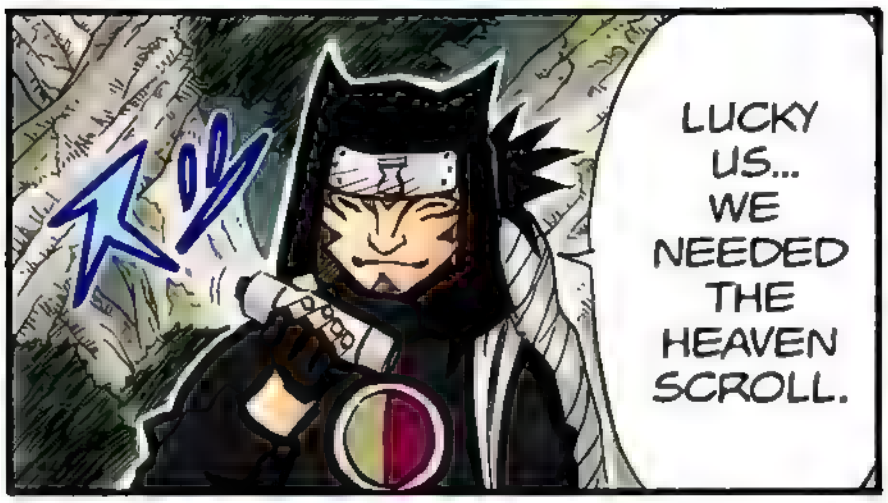
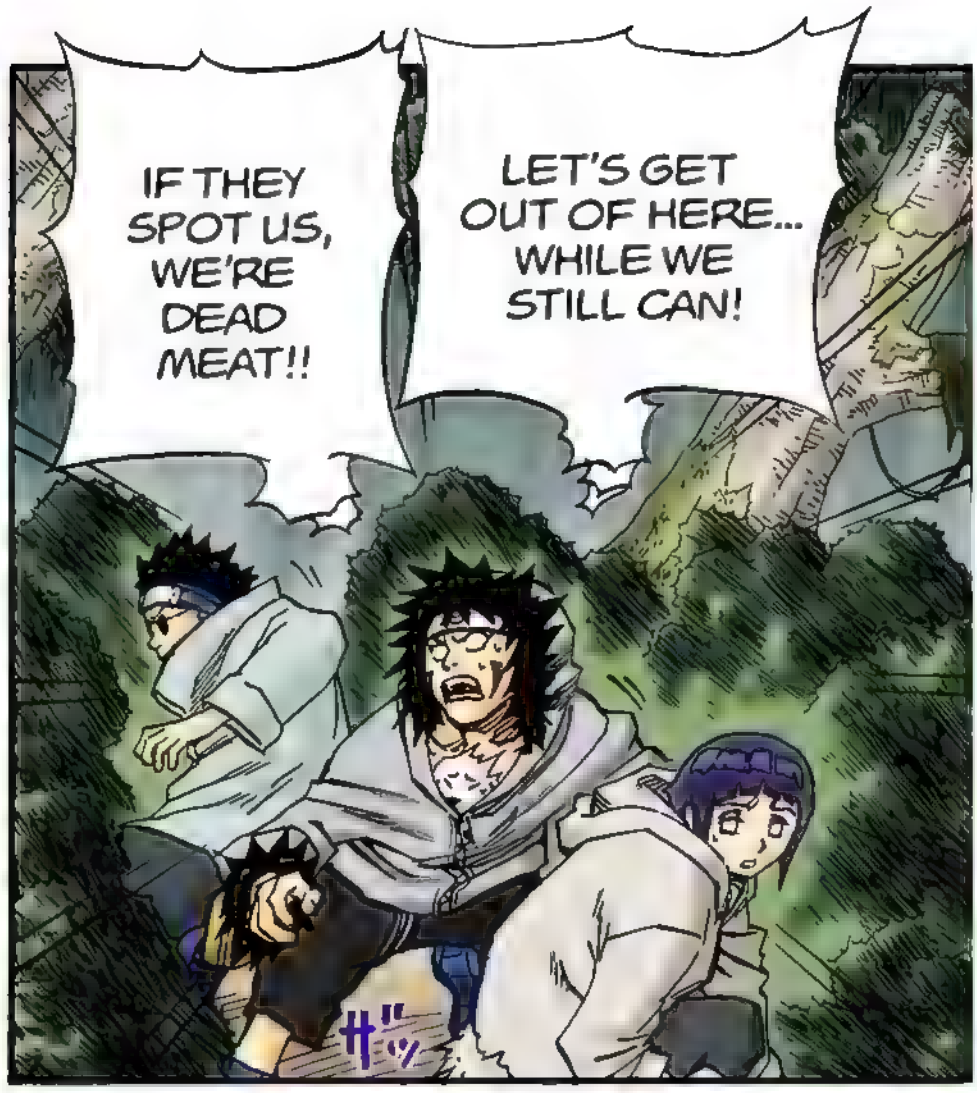
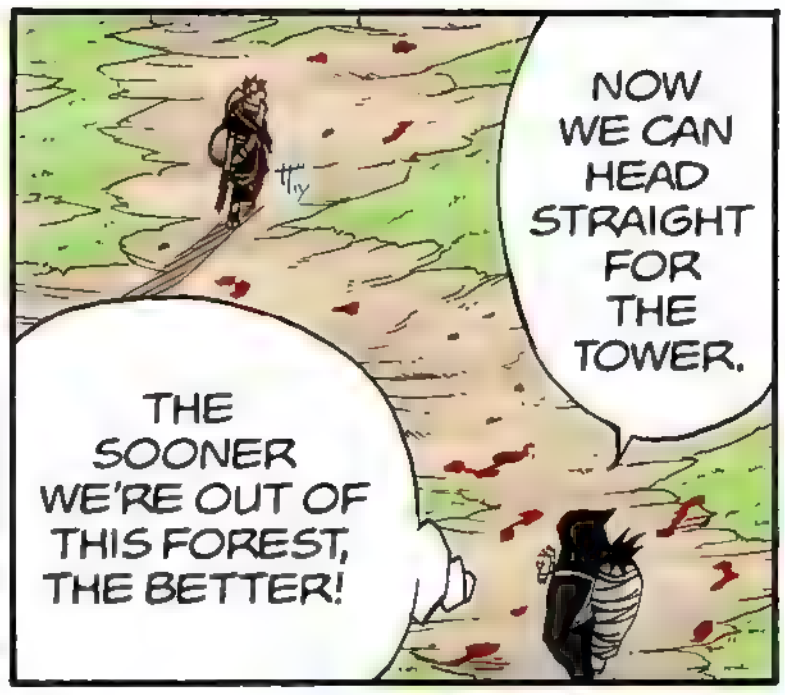
BYE-BYE!




LUCKY US... WE NEEDED THE HEAVEN SCROLL.


IF THEY SPOT US, WE'RE DEAD MEAT!!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE... WHILE WE STILL CAN!

NOT YET!


NOW WE CAN HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THE TOWER.
THE SOONER WE'RE OUT OF THIS FOREST, THE BETTER!

NO...
...I STILL HAVEN'T BEEN SATED.

!

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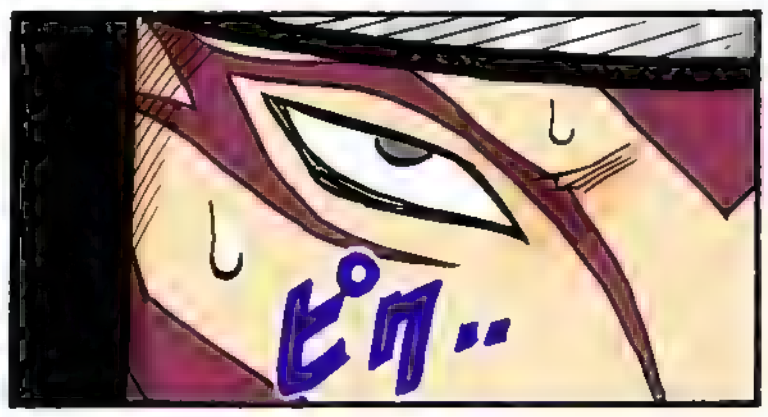
COME ON, GAARA... LET'S GO.

AW, MAN! DOES HE KNOW WE'RE HERE?!

ONE SET OF SCROLLS IS ALL WE NEED. WE'RE DONE.
GAARA! MAYBE YOU'LL BE FINE, BUT...
...TEMARI AND I CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE CHANCES!
TAK

COWARD!
ARE YOU FRIGHT-ENED...?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……

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FOOL... I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM YOU.

CROSS ME, AND I'LL KILL YOU.

I'VE NEVER THOUGHT OF EITHER OF YOU AS MY SIBLINGS.

!

...LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR BIG BROTHER TELLS YOU!

THAT'S ENOUGH!

JUST FOR ONCE, GAARA...

カリッ

PLEASE... DON'T BE SO CRUEL.

AREN'T I LIKE A SISTER TO YOU? I'M BEGGING...

C-COME ON, GAARA!

!!

!!

!!

GAARA!

OKAY... FINE.

サラ

サラ

愛

TAK

.....

POK

UGH... THAT'S WHY I HATE KIDS!

:-WHINE:-

HUF

HUF

WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

WHOA...

NO NONDER AKAMARU WAS SO UPSET... YOU WERE TRYING TO WARN US, EH, BOY?

...HE'S DEADLY.

YEAH... THAT KID FROM SUNAGAKURE...

...WHATEVER HIS STORY IS...

...THAT THE BIG GUY WAS *IN DANGER*...NOT *DANGEROUS*! HE MEANT THE KID FROM SAND WAS GOING TO KILL HIM!

AKAMARU WAS TRYING TO TELL US...

ナンバー 60 : THE LAST CHANCE!!

MEANWHILE, NARUTO AND HIS TEAM ARE...

ドガ

COWABUNGA!

ART OF THE SHADOW DOPPELGANGER!!

バシャ バシャ

バシャ

GLUB BLUB GLUB BLUB!!

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バシャ バシャ

ボン ボン
HUF HUF HUF HUF PUF PUF
スコン
ビチャ
THIS ISN'T EXACTLY EASY, YA KNOW!
LET'S DO IT THREE MORE TIMES. C'MON, STUPID.
ムキー
バシャ
SO... LET'S SWAP JOBS! YOU DIVE!!
THREE FISH WON'T LAST US LONG. I WANT TO PRESERVE SOME FOR LATER.
GO UNDER AND FLAIL AROUND AGAIN!!
!
?
HEY, WAIT A MINUTE!!
...ALL RIGHT. THREE FISH WILL DO FOR NOW.
ジュビ
SASUKE!! I'VE FINISHED SETTING UP THE STICKS AND KINDLING! COULD YOU PLEASE IGNITE IT WITH YOUR *GÔKAKYÛ* FIREBALL?!
A-!

THE SECOND EXAM STARTED FOUR DAYS AGO... RIGHT?

YEAH...

110°F

110°F

OH! HUNGRY, I'M HUNGRY! HURRY UP AND BE READY TO GET IN MY TUMMY!

WHICH MEANS... A LOT OF TEAMS MUST HAVE FINISHED BY NOW.

...SO IT WILL BE OVER IN LESS THAN 26 HOURS.

AND IT BEGAN AT AROUND 2:30 P.M....

THAT LOOKS LIKE THE BIGGEST LITTLE FISHIE, RIGHT THERE!!

...PEOPLE WILL BE GETTING DESPERATE.

スッ

ANNOUNCING THE RESULTS OF OUR CHARACTER POPULARITY POLL!!

TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES:
72,733 VOTES!!!*

THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR
ALL THOSE VOTES!!!!

11TH: MITARASHI ANKO	332 VOTES
12TH: HYUGA NEJI	288 VOTES
13TH: YUHI KURENAI	217 VOTES
14TH: MASTER GAI	216 VOTES
15TH: OROCHIMARU	199 VOTES
16TH: MORINO IBIKI	174 VOTES
17TH: SARUTOBI ASUMA	165 VOTES
18TH: KISHIMOTO MASASHI	157 VOTES
19TH: INARI	156 VOTES
20TH: KONOHAMARU	143 VOTES
21ST: INUZUKA KIBA	135 VOTES
22ND: KABUTO	110 VOTES
23RD: OTONIN SOUND NINJA	107 VOTES
24TH: TENTEN	83 VOTES
25TH: NINE-TAILED FOX	72 VOTES
26TH: TEMARI	71 VOTES
27TH: NARA SHIKAMARU	66 VOTES
28TH: KANKURO	62 VOTES
29TH: EBISU	55 VOTES
30TH: YAMANAKA INO	53 VOTES

ナンバー

60 : THE LAST CHANCE!!

...SO ALMOST EVERYONE'S DONE.

YEAH... IT'S ALREADY THE MIDDLE OF THE FOURTH DAY...

HUF

PUF

THERE'S NOT MUCH POINT IN HUNTING... I DOUBT THERE'S ANYONE LEFT WITH WHAT WE NEED... OR WITH WEAK ENOUGH DEFENSES TO LET

HUF

PUF

PUF

HUF

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

I'LL FIND SOMETHING TO EAT.

YOU TWO GET SOME REST...

...THANKS...

TAK

IN ANY CASE...

IT'S RIGHT AROUND LUNCH-TIME.

HEY...

HM?

UMMM... I GUESS I WASN'T PAYING THAT MUCH ATTENTION WHEN THEY SHOWED IT TO US BEFORE THE EXAM...

WHY DO YOU ASK?

DOESN'T... THE OTHER SCROLL HAVE THE CHARACTER FOR HEAVEN WRITTEN RIGHT HERE?

AND, UNLIKE THIS ONE, IT HAS A LIGHT-COLORED BORDER AT EITHER END?

D-DON'T TELL ME... YOU...?!

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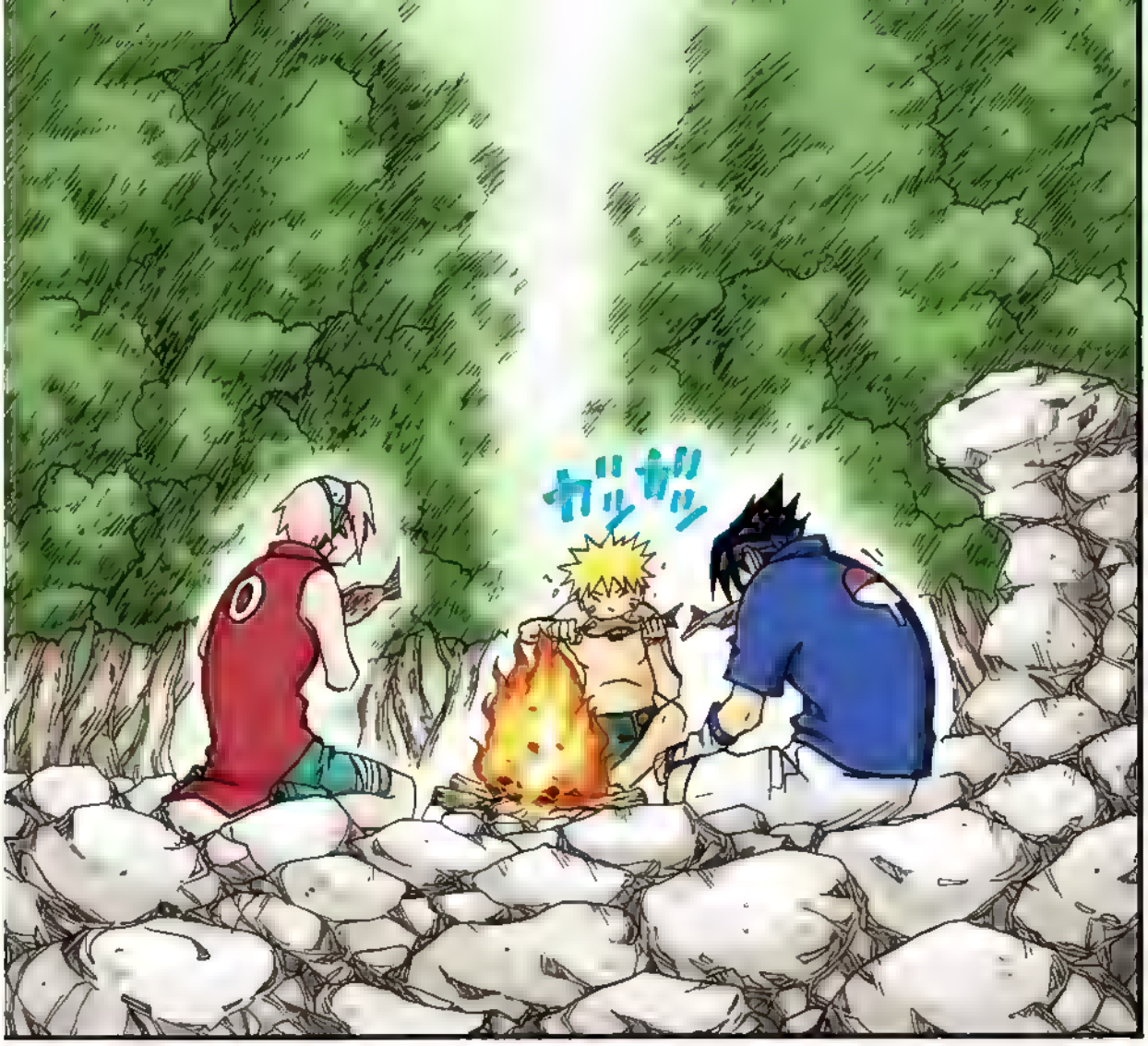
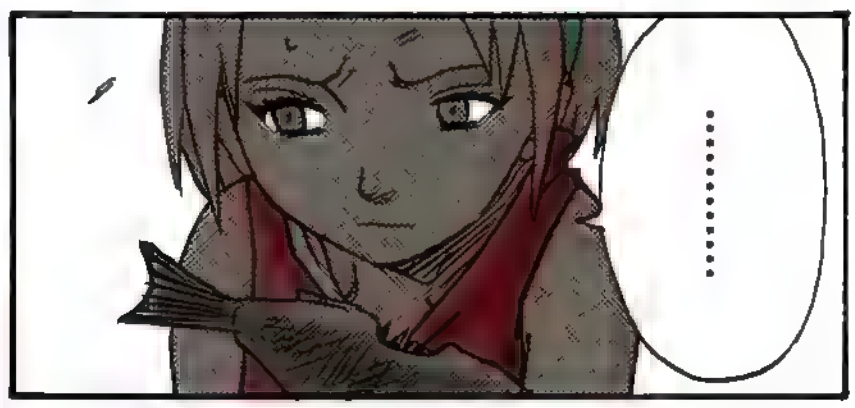


...THERE MIGHT NOT BE ANY MORE HEAVEN SCROLLS LEFT.
I'M WORRIED THAT...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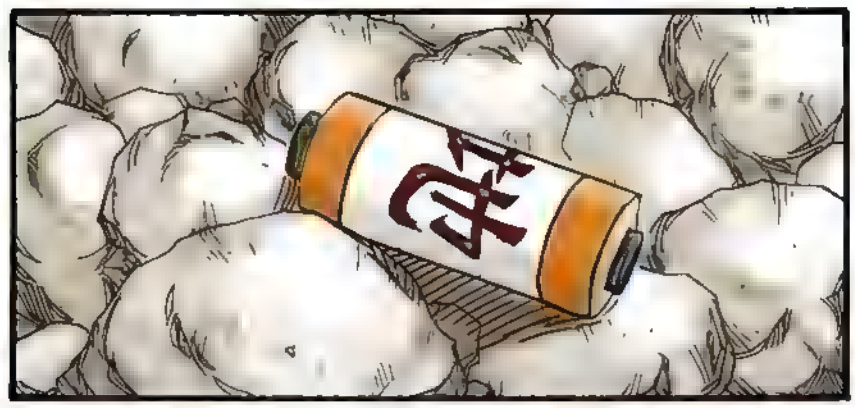
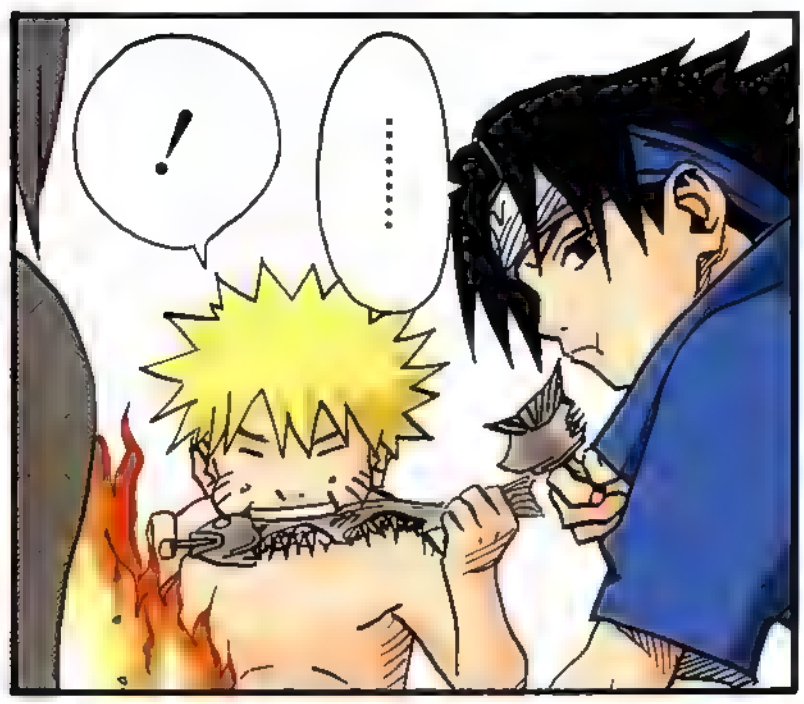


WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SAKURA?
.....


!
.....

WELL, THE SECOND EXAM IS ONLY DUE TO LAST FIVE DAYS... AND FOUR DAYS HAVE ALREADY ELAPSED.

THAT'S 80 PERCENT OF THE TEST TIME.

SINCE YOU NEED BOTH SCROLLS TO PASS, A MAXIMUM OF 13 TEAMS WILL SUCCEED.

THERE ARE 26 TEAMS OF THREE COMPETING...

?

AND ONLY 13 OF EACH SCROLL, HEAVEN OR EARTH.

AND... THAT WAS BEFORE...

...THAT OROCHIMARU GUY WHO ATTACKED US...

...BURNED OUR HEAVEN SCROLL.

?

...AT THAT POINT...

...THE NUMBER OF TEAMS THAT COULD POSSIBLY PASS THE TEST DROPPED TO 12.

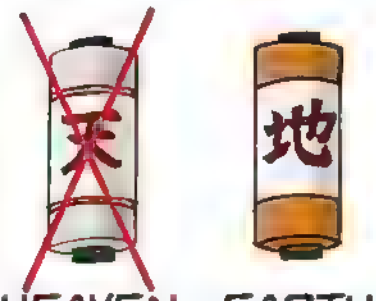
WHICH MEANS THAT...

.....

AS SOON AS ONE OF EITHER TYPE OF SCROLL IS DESTROYED...

...ONE SCROLL OF THE OTHER TYPE AUTOMATICALLY BECOMES USELESS.

ONE SET



HEAVEN EARTH

AND WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING IF ALL 25 OF THE OTHER SCROLLS SURVIVED, EITHER.

THE NEXT ENEMY WE MEET...

WE'LL HAVE TO WIDEN OUR SEARCH...

...TO MAKE UP FOR THE TIME AND DISTANCE WE'VE LOST.

WE SPLIT UP FROM THE REST OF THE TEAMS FROM KONOHA... AND HAD TO SPEND TWO DAYS LETTING OUR WOUNDS HEAL.

.....

...OUR LAST CHANCE!!

...COULD BE...

I'M GOING TO GO GET SOME WATER..

……

ズン

!

HEY... HEY!

トン

AND WE WON'T EVEN HAVE TO THROW A PUNCH!

THERE'S ANOTHER WAY TO GET A HEAVEN SCROLL!

HOW?!

ゴゴ

YES... THIS WAY.

N-NO WAY...!

NINJUTSU MANUALS, RECIPES FOR POISONS, BLANK SCROLLS FOR TAKING NOTES...

A FEW BRUSH STROKES HERE, SOME DECORATION THERE, AND ONE OF THESE CAN PASS FOR A HEAVEN SCROLL IN NO TIME!

IF IT'S SCROLLS THEY WANT, I GOT A MILLION OF 'EM.

...OR WHAT'S WRITTEN INSIDE THEM!! THE MINUTE THEY OPEN IT, WE'LL GET BUSTED, YOU IDIOT!

EVEN IF YOU COULD MAKE THE OUTSIDE LOOK THE SAME, WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THE INSIDE OF THE SCROLLS LOOK LIKE...

!?

W-WAIT JUST A MINUTE!!

SO... YEAH! YOU PROBABLY NEED THAT PASSWORD TO GET INTO THE TOWER AT THE END OF THE EXAM!

I BET YOU THAT'S IT!!

...THESE THINGS HAVE SOME KIND OF CRYPTIC PASSWORD WRITTEN IN THEM THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE UNTIL YOU BRING BOTH PIECES TOGETHER.

WELL, USUALLY...

BUT HE IS SUCH AN INNOCENT... AND SO DUMB!

TO THINK THAT PROUD LOOK ON HIS FACE FOOLED ME INTO EXPECTING HIM TO ACTUALLY COME UP WITH SOMETHING!

しゅん

WE NEVER SAW THE INSIDE OF A HEAVEN SCROLL IN THE FIRST PLACE, SO THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT IT SAID!

IT'S NO USE EVEN TRYING TO MAKE A FAKE!!!

SO WHAT?!

THIS EARTH SCROLL...

!

...WE COULD USE WHAT WE *DO* HAVE TO DEDUCE ITS CONTENTS...?

BUT WHAT IF...

DON'T EVEN SAY IT...!

NO...

...IT HOLDS THE SECRET...

I'M GONNA OPEN IT!

WE WERE TOLD NEVER TO LOOK INSIDE THE SCROLLS. NOT FOR ANY REASON...

NOT UNTIL WE REACH THE TOWER!

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE RULES, YOU IDIOT?!

DWWW!!

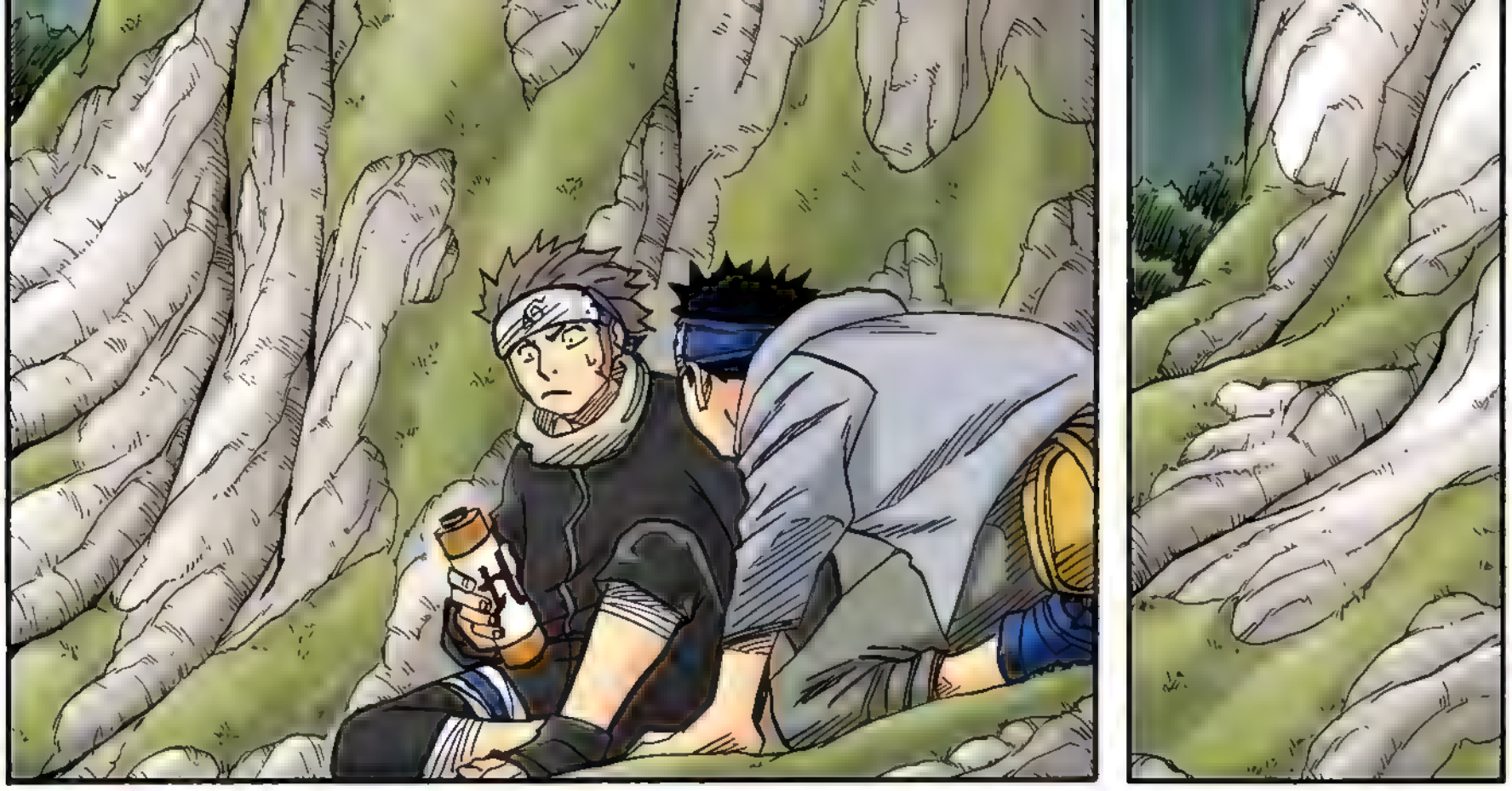
ドゴ

NO!!

.....

!!

BUT WE'RE IN DEEP DUNG AS IT IS!



BE CAREFUL...
THIS MAY BE A TRAP... OR A SPELL.
M.
PEEL
I KNOW! I GET IT!
ゴク
……
ゴク
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!!!

AAAAARGH!!

!?

HUF

HUF

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HUF

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ズバーン

AND WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF TIME!!

THIS IS NOT GOOD! THEY'RE BOTH UN-CONSCIOUS...

H-HEY! WHAT IS IT?!

WHAT HAPPENED?! HEY!!

……

ｺﾞｸ

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PEEL

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HE

!!!

!!

I WOULDN'T DO THAT IF I WERE YOU.

DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE RULES?!

!!

!!!

!!

AN ENEMY...?!

...YOU'RE HOPELESS! I CAN'T TURN MY BACK ON YOU FOR ONE MINUTE!

.....

I-I'M SORRY...

THAT WAS CLOSE...

THEY ALL LAY UNCONSCIOUS HERE IN THE FOREST OF DEATH UNTIL AFTER THE EXAM WAS OVER.

LAST TIME I TOOK THIS TEST, EVERYONE WHO PEEKED AT THE SCROLLS...

...WAS HIT IN THE EYE WITH A SPELL OF HYPNOSIS THE MOMENT THEY LOOKED INSIDE.

"...WILL FIND THEMSELVES IN A SITUATION WHERE THEY WILL BE FORCED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE EXAM."

"THOSE WHO DISOBEY THE RULES..."

...OR YOU COULD HAVE JUST STOLEN IT FROM NARUTO RIGHT THEN.

PROBABLY NOT...

WELL... I WASN'T AFTER YOUR SCROLL, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE IMPLYING.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WANDERING AROUND BY YOURSELF?

YOUR NAME IS KABUTO, ISN'T IT?

BUT I GOT SEPARATED FROM MY TEAM. I'M ON MY WAY TO JOIN UP WITH THEM AT THE TOWER NOW.

ゴゾゴゾ

NOPE... I'VE ALREADY GOT A SET.

BUT YOU'RE STILL AFTER THE HEAVEN SCROLL, TOO, AREN'T YOU?

SEE YOU AROUND.

WAIT!!

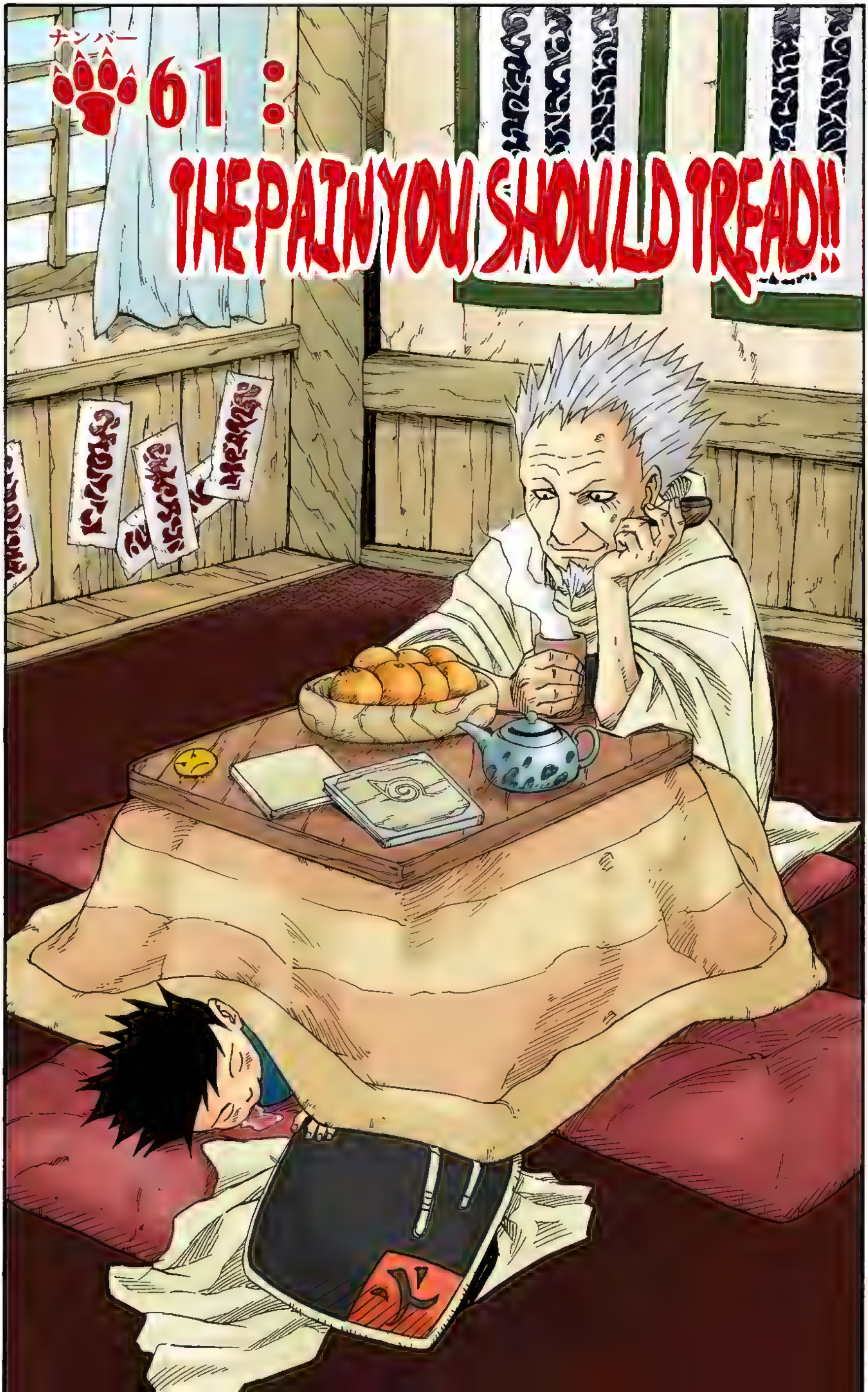
WHAT?!

FIGHT ME.

SWEET...!!

ナンバー

61：THE PAIN YOU SHOULD TREAD!!



FIGHT YOU...?!

.....

HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!

S-SASUKE...!!

...BUT OUR TIME IS ALMOST UP.

...I WISH I WERE...

ARE YOU JOKING?

.....

SHUT UP...!!

I...I'M SORRY, SASUKE, BUT I THINK NARUTO IS RIGHT.

SASUKE, THINK!!

KABUTO JUST SAVED OUR BUTTS, YOU KNOW!!

HE NEVER THINKS OF ANYONE BUT HIMSELF!!!

BUT... SASUKE...

.....

.....

CHALLENGING HIM IS THE ONLY WAY WE'LL BE OUT OF THE FOREST IN TIME TO PASS THIS TEST.

I TRIED TO WARN YOU BEFORE.

THERE'S NO OTHER WAY.

!

!

THAT'S A LIE.

!!

.....!!

YOU'RE MORE INTERESTED IN MAKING A BIG GESTURE THAN IN REACHING YOUR GOAL...

...A LIE...?

...YOU WOULD HAVE JUST BLINDSIDED ME.

IF YOU WERE TRULY COMMITTED...

YOU PUT ME ON GUARD AND ASSURED YOURSELF OF A FAIR FIGHT.

...OTHERWISE YOU WOULDN'T HAVE RUN THE RISK OF ISSUING THAT PRETENTIOUS FORMAL CHALLENGE.

!!

THAT'S WHAT BEING A NINJA IS ALL ABOUT.

74

!

...THE PATH YOU SHOULD TREAD.

...LET ME SHOW YOU...

!

...IT'S GETTING PRETTY HEAVY IN HERE...

...WOW...

I DON'T THINK LESS OF YOU FOR BEING THAT WAY. IN FACT...

.....

RATS!

THE SMOKE FROM YOUR FIRE AND THE AROMA OF THOSE FISH YOU ROASTED CAN BE SMELLED FOR QUITE A DISTANCE.

BY NOW, EVERY WILD ANIMAL OR ENEMY IN THE AREA MUST BE MOVING IN ON US.

BUT... LET'S MOVE WHILE WE DISCUSS IT.

IF YOU WERE MORE ALERT, YOU'D KNOW IT, TOO.
!
ARE THERE EVEN ANY ENEMIES LEFT THIS LATE?
LOTS OF 'EM!
WE ALL SHARE A COMMON GOAL...
...RIGHT? THE TOWER IN THE CENTER OF THE FOREST.
.....
...UMM...
AND DO YOU KNOW THE INTELLIGENT THING TO DO?
IT TAKES INTELLIGENCE TO WIN BATTLES IN TERRITORY LIKE A JUNGLE OR FOREST...

OH!

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT... AN AMBUSH!!

SO THE CLOSER WE GET TO THE END OF THE EXAM, THE MORE PEOPLE WILL BE CARRYING SCROLLS TO THE FINISH LINE... MAKING THE TOWER AND ITS VICINITY...

...THE LIKELIEST PLACE TO FIND THEM.

WE MAKE OUR TARGET...

...SOMEONE WHO HAS CAPTURED BOTH THE HEAVEN AND EARTH SCROLLS AND IS TAKING THEM BACK TO THE TOWER!

OH! COOL! I GET IT!

.....?

.....

GRIN

YOU'RE ONE-THIRD RIGHT.

HUH?

...SO THERE ARE GOING TO BE A LOT OF DESPERATE CHARACTERS SETTING SNARES FOR THE UNWARY AROUND THAT TOWER.

.....!

FIRST OF ALL, YOU WON'T BE THE ONLY ONES WHO'VE FIGURED THAT OUT...

HAH!! I PLAY MY BEST GAMES WITH A HANDICAP!

I GET IT! WHILE WE'RE WAITING TO AMBUSH THEM...

...THEY'LL BE TRYING TO AMBUSH US!!

KABUTO... WHAT'S THE REST OF THE ANSWER...?

...AND WALK AWAY WITH THE OTHER SCROLL WE NEED TO PASS THE SECOND EXAM!!

THIS IS GONNA BE SWEET! IT'LL BE WORTH A LITTLE SWEAT IF WE GET TO KICK EVERYONE ELSE'S BUTTS...

...AND YOU THINK YOU'RE HOME FREE, DON'T RELAX YOUR GUARD FOR AN INSTANT. THE CONDITIONS OF THIS EXAM ARE APT TO GIVE RISE TO THEM...

EVEN WHEN YOU'RE STANDING AT THE TOWER DOOR...

COLLECTORS?

THIS TYPE OF EXAM BRINGS OUT ANOTHER SORT OF ENEMY... I CALL THEM THE COLLECTORS.

...SO THEY TRY TO GET THEIR HANDS ON AS MANY EXTRA SETS OF SCROLLS AS THEY CAN TO BUY THEMSELVES SAFE PASSAGE FROM ANYONE THEY CAN'T OR WON'T FACE FAIRLY.

...BOTTOM FEEDERS. THEY'RE THE ONES WHO MAY NOT BE GOOD ENOUGH TO BEAT EVERY ENEMY THEY FIND...

...BECAUSE IF THOSE TEAMS ARE ON THEIR SECOND OR THIRD ATTEMPTS AT PASSING THE CHÛNIN EXAMS, THE COLLECTORS CAN BARTER THE SURPLUS SCROLLS FOR ADVANCE INTELLIGENCE ABOUT THE NEXT STAGES OF THE TEST.

SOME OF THEM ALSO WANT TO HAVE EXTRA SCROLLS TO OFFER OTHER TEAMS FROM THEIR HOME VILLAGES WHO MAY NOT HAVE FARED AS WELL...

...JUST SO THEY'LL HAVE LESS COMPETITION TO DEAL WITH AS THEY MOVE ON TO THE THIRD EXAM AND BEYOND.

AND THERE ARE THOSE WHO AREN'T AFTER YOUR SCROLL... THEY'RE AFTER YOUR LIFE! THEY WANT TO ELIMINATE STRONG TEAMS NOW...

……!!

AND, AS YOU CAN PROBABLY GUESS, MOST OF THESE SHREWD, RUTHLESS TEAMS NEVER MAKE THE MISTAKE...

...OF GETTING COMPLACENT OR LETTING THEIR OWN GUARD DOWN. THOSE ARE THE DEADLIEST...

...AND THE WORST!!

……!!

...THAT'S WHY YOU DIDN'T JUST TAKE OFF AFTER HELPING US. YOU'RE VULNERABLE, TOO!

SO...

...RIGHT.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS, EH?

……!

HERE'S WHERE THE FUN REALLY BEGINS.

WE'RE IN VIEW OF THE TOWER..

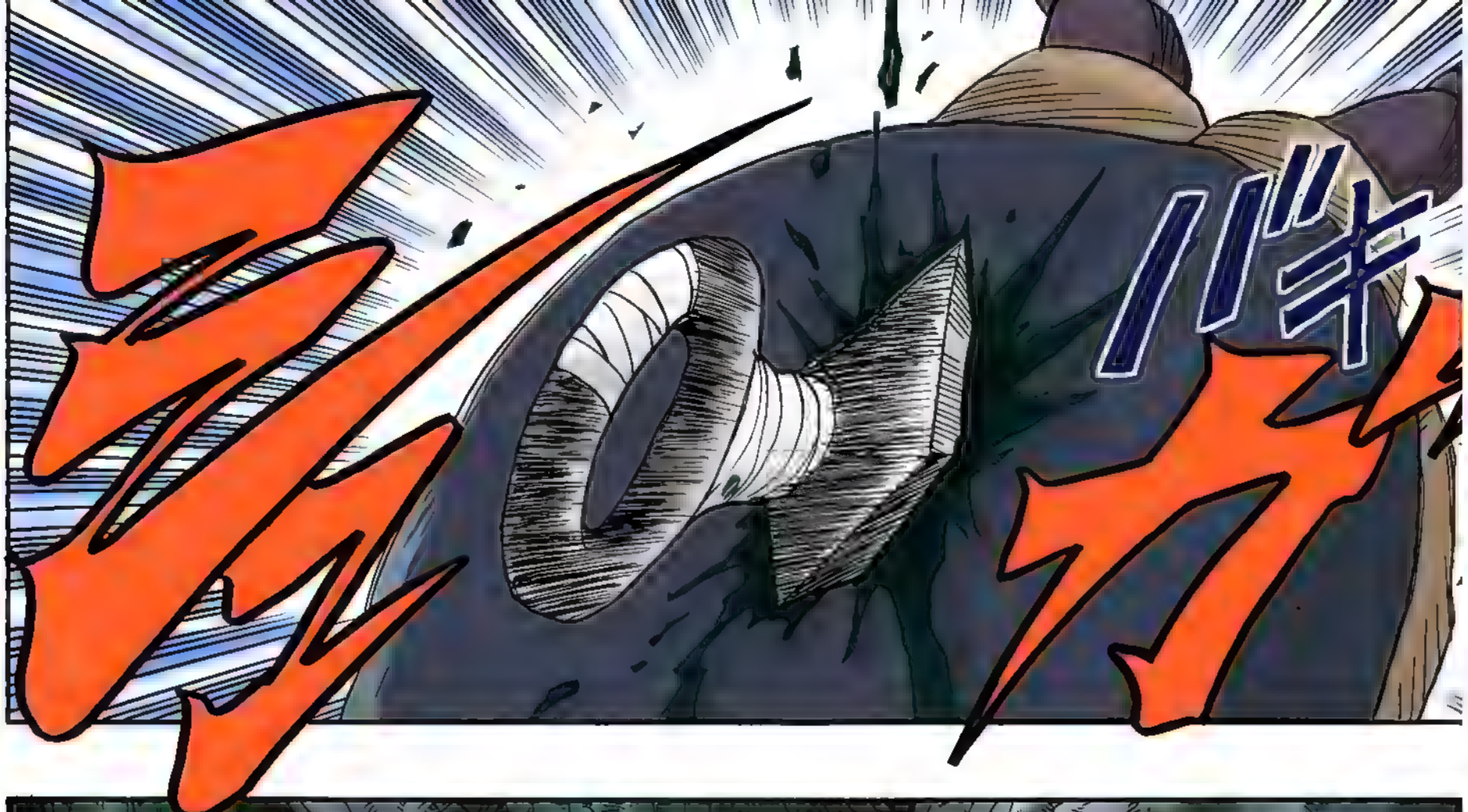
!!

AN ENEMY... SO SOON?!

!!

THEN LET'S GET TO IT!!

OVER THERE!!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!

THAT IS SO GROSS!!

A REALLY BIG CENTIPEDE...

WOW!

AW, MAN! IT WAS A CENTIPEDE!

THE IDEA HERE IS NOT TO ATTRACT ANY ATTENTION. LET ME MAKE THIS REALLY SIMPLE FOR YOU.

ナイ

NARUTO...

HUNH?

LET'S KEEP IT QUIET AND REMAIN OUT OF SIGHT.

SO STARTING NOW...

...WE'RE BASICALLY TRUMPETING OUR ARRIVAL TO EVERYONE AROUND.

AND THEY'LL THROW US A WELCOME PARTY... BUT ONE THAT WE'LL SURELY NOT ENJOY!

IF WE STOMP THROUGH THE FOREST LIKE A HERD OF WILD ELEPHANTS...

...RIGHT.

OKAY...

GOTCHA!

PUF

PUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

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I'M SORRY... I'M DONE...

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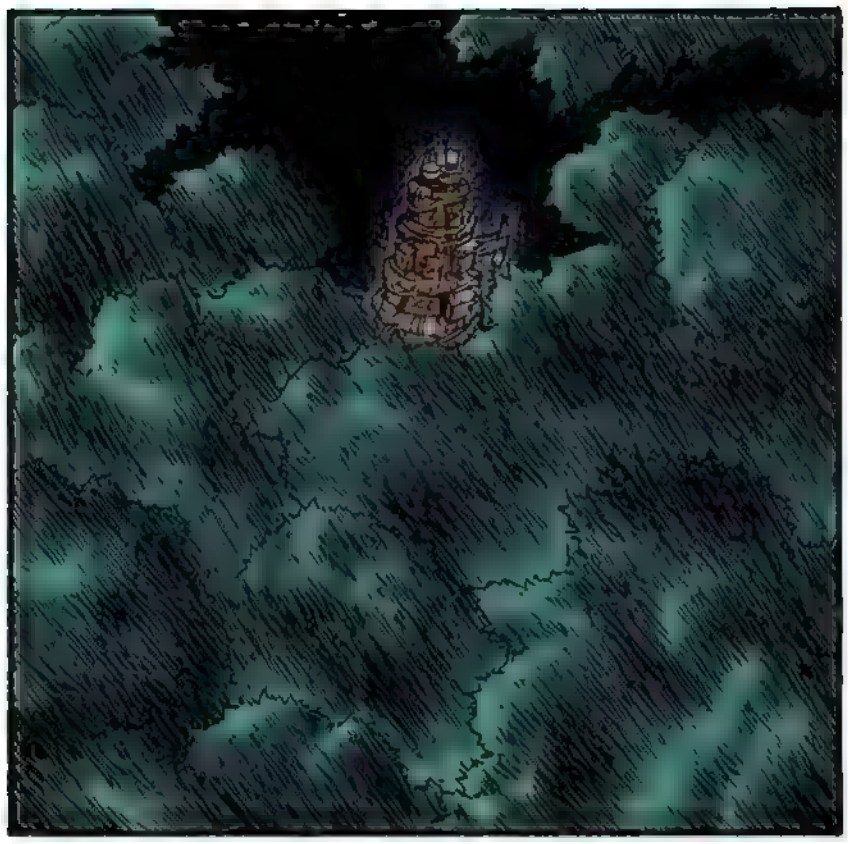
HUF



I-I DON'T KNOW HOW FAR WE'VE COME...
BUT THE TOWER NEVER GETS ANY CLOSER.
SAKURA...!!
HUF
PUF
HUF
PUF

...WE'RE ALREADY ENJOYING SOME ENEMY'S WARM WELCOME!
APPAR-ENTLY...

IT'S BIZARRE. IT'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF US, PLAIN AS DAY...
.....
...SHE'S RIGHT!
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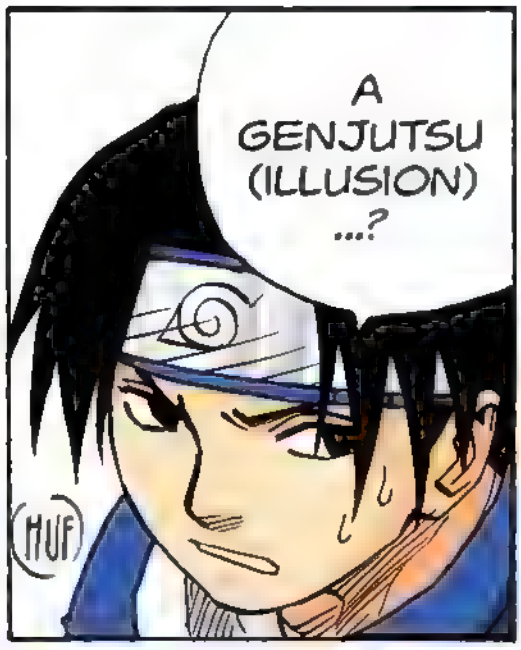
HUF

AW, MAN! NO WAY!

!!
HUF

LOOK!


A GENJUTSU (ILLUSION) ...?
HUF

YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING!!

WH-WHAT IS THIS CRAP?!

AND, UNDOUBTEDLY, BEING WATCHED?

WE'VE BEEN VERY, VERY CAUTIOUSLY....
...RUNNING AROUND IN CIRCLES!
HUF
THAT'S WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!
AND WE FELL FOR IT!

IT WOULD MAKE SENSE. WHOEVER DID THIS IS WAITING FOR US TO WEAR OURSELVES OUT...

...SO THEY CAN MOVE IN AND TAKE US DOWN!

SO THEY'LL MAKE THEIR MOVE SOON.

THEN THEY MUST REALIZE OUR STRENGTH IS FADING...

PUF

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HUF

HUF

PUF

PUF

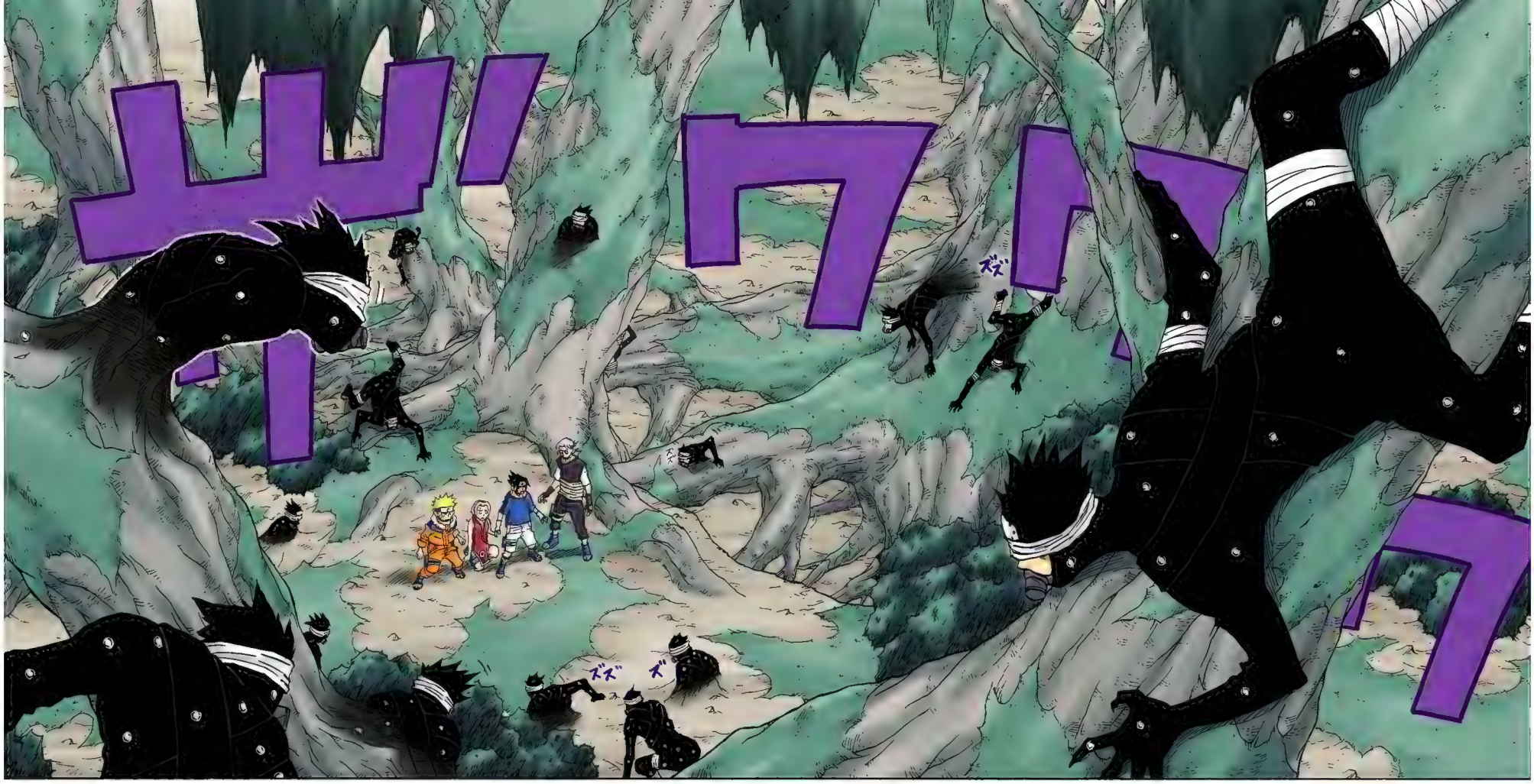
HUF

HUF

RIGHT...

!!

!!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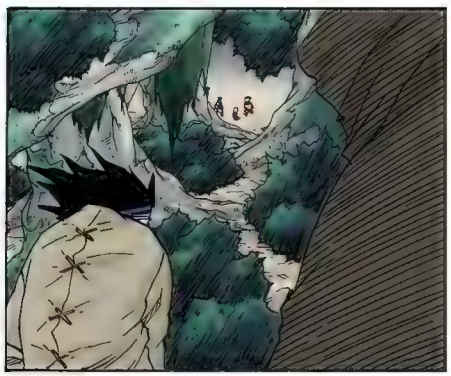
YEP! JUST ABOUT THE PERFECT HANDICAP!
HAH!
(HUF)
HERE THEY COME...



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62:
TRAPPED LIKE RATS!!

WH-WHAT THE...?

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...NOT TO MENTION ALL THE DOPPEL-GANGERS.

THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM...

ゾロ

(huf)

HUF

!!

YOU'RE ALL TRAPPED LIKE RATS!

HEH HEH...

SHUT UP!!

GUESS THEY JUST CAN'T TAKE IT!

GOOD ONE, NARUTO!!

HUNH?!

!!

!!

WH-WHAT ARE THEY...?!

ACK!

!!

SHA-
RIN-
GAN
!!

I'VE GOT TO SEE TO THE HEART OF WHAT'S GOING ON!!

!!

NARUTO!

!!

ヨシュ ガッ ガッ

!!

ズッ

SASUKE!!

WHAT ARE YOU--?! GET DOWN!!!

!!

!!

!!

!!

WHAT'S HAPPENING...? MY BODY WON'T OBEY MY COMMANDS...!

HUF

HUF

PUF

UHN...

HUF

.....!

SASUKE!!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

POK

UGH...

PUF

HUF

SURRENDER YOUR SCROLL...!

THIS THING IS REAL... SOLID...

NOT AN ILLU-SION!

...EVEN WHEN DOPPEL-GANGERS HAVE SOME SUBSTANCE, THEY USUALLY FADE AWAY ONCE YOU BEAT THEM... AND THESE GUYS ARE STILL HERE. SO IS THIS GENJUTSU AFTER ALL? WHICH IS IT?!

PUF

DOES THE FACT THAT THEY PHYSICALLY HURT KABUTO MEAN THESE GUYS ARE SOLID DOPPELGANGERS AND NOT JUST ILLUSIONS...?

HUF

WAIT! IT'S NO GOOD!!

BLAST IT!!

!!?

PUF

...GENJUTSU CAST BY THE ENEMY!

HUF

THEY ARE JUST ILLUSIONS...

HUF

THE ILLUSIONIST IS WATCHING FROM SOMEWHERE CLOSE BY, SYNCHRONIZING A REAL, PHYSICAL ATTACK WITH THE MOVEMENTS OF THE ENEMIES WE THINK WE'RE SEEING!

IT ENHANCES OUR PERCEPTION THAT THE SHADOW SHINOBI WE'RE FIGHTING ARE REAL.

NO...

SASUKE'S RIGHT.

B-BUT...

KABUTO'S WOUND IS REAL...!

...BUT HE'S HOPING WE'LL TRY.

NO... GOOD AS HE IS, HE CAN CONVINCE US TO BELIEVE THE KUNAI ARE COMING FROM ANY DIRECTION HE WANTS US TO.

WE'LL NEVER FIND HIM THAT WAY...

...AND KICK HIS BUTT!!

SO I'LL HUNT DOWN THE COWARD WHO'S THROWING KUNAI KNIVES FROM BEHIND THE SCENES...

...WON'T COME OUT AND FACE US UNTIL WE'RE COMPLETELY WORN OUT AND HELPLESS.

THE ACTUAL, PHYSICAL FOE...

MUF

MUF

.....

PUF

BASED ON MY EXPERIENCE...

...HIS KIND ARE PRETTY MUCH WIMPS WHEN IT COMES TO TAIJUTSU (PHYSICAL ARTS).

PUF

MUF

...IF THAT'S HOW THEY WANT TO PLAY IT.

OKAY...

...IS TO KEEP MOVING AND AVOID THEIR ATTACKS.

RIGHT NOW, OUR ONLY CHOICE...

THE NIGHT IS YOUNG...! HEH HEH HEH...

I WONDER HOW LONG THEY'LL LAST...

ガッ

OW--!

HEY!!

ムーズ

Puf

Puf

Puf

Puf

Puf

HUF

PUF

HUF

HOW LONG CAN WE?!

OHHH! HOW LONG CAN THEY KEEP THIS UP?!

44~

NARUTO, NO!! DON'T SQUANDER YOUR CHAKRA!!

A DIRECT ATTACK CAN'T HELP US!

...WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO JUST HURL KNIVES AT US WITHOUT US SEEING WHERE THEY'RE HIDING!

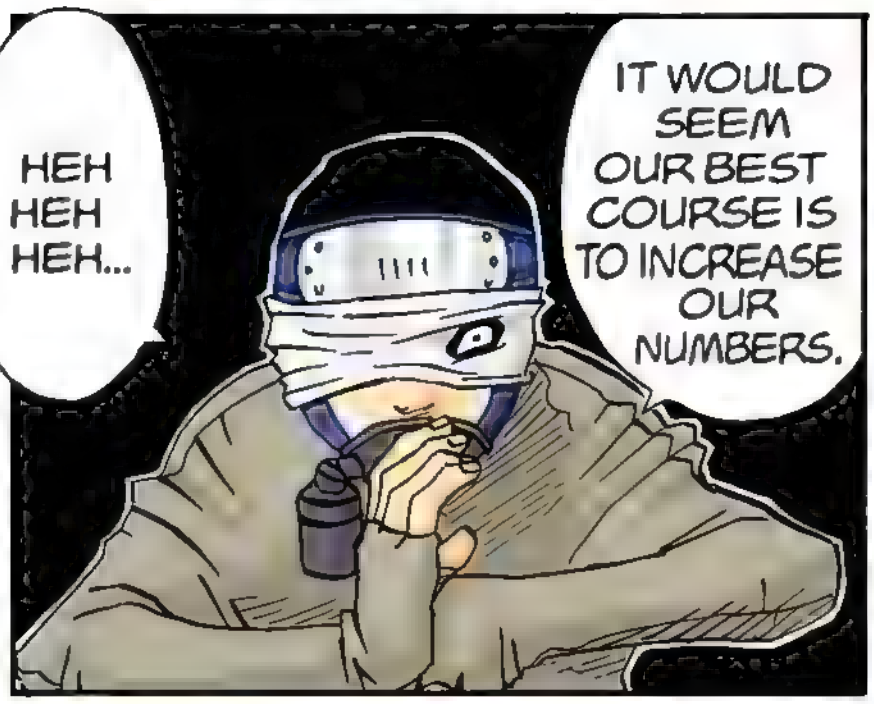
IF WE WERE TO DISSIPATE ALL OF THE ILLUSIONS SIMULTANEOUSLY, WHOEVER'S CASTING THEM...

KAGEBUNSHIN NO JUTSU!
ART OF THE SHADOW DOPPELGANGER!!

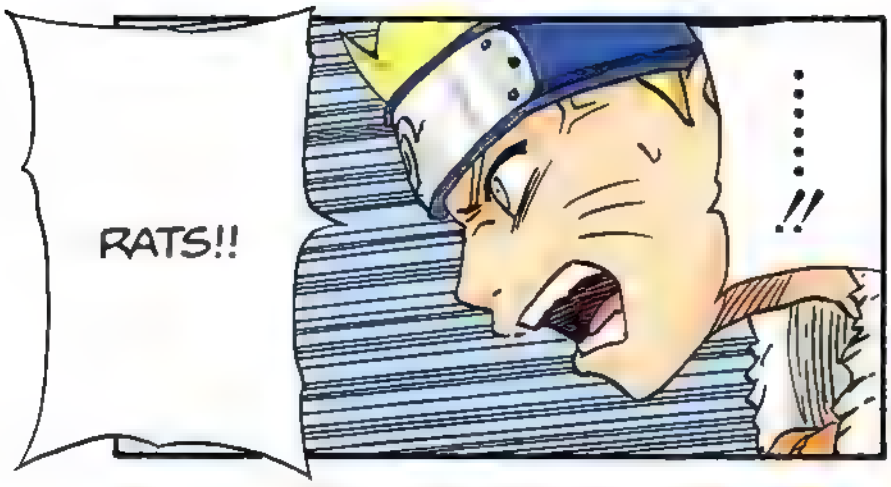
CHAAARGE!!!

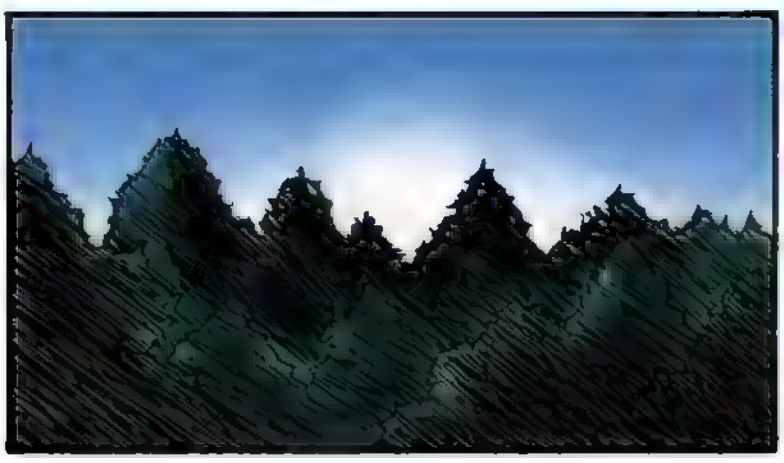
SHADOW DOPPEL-GANGERS...!!

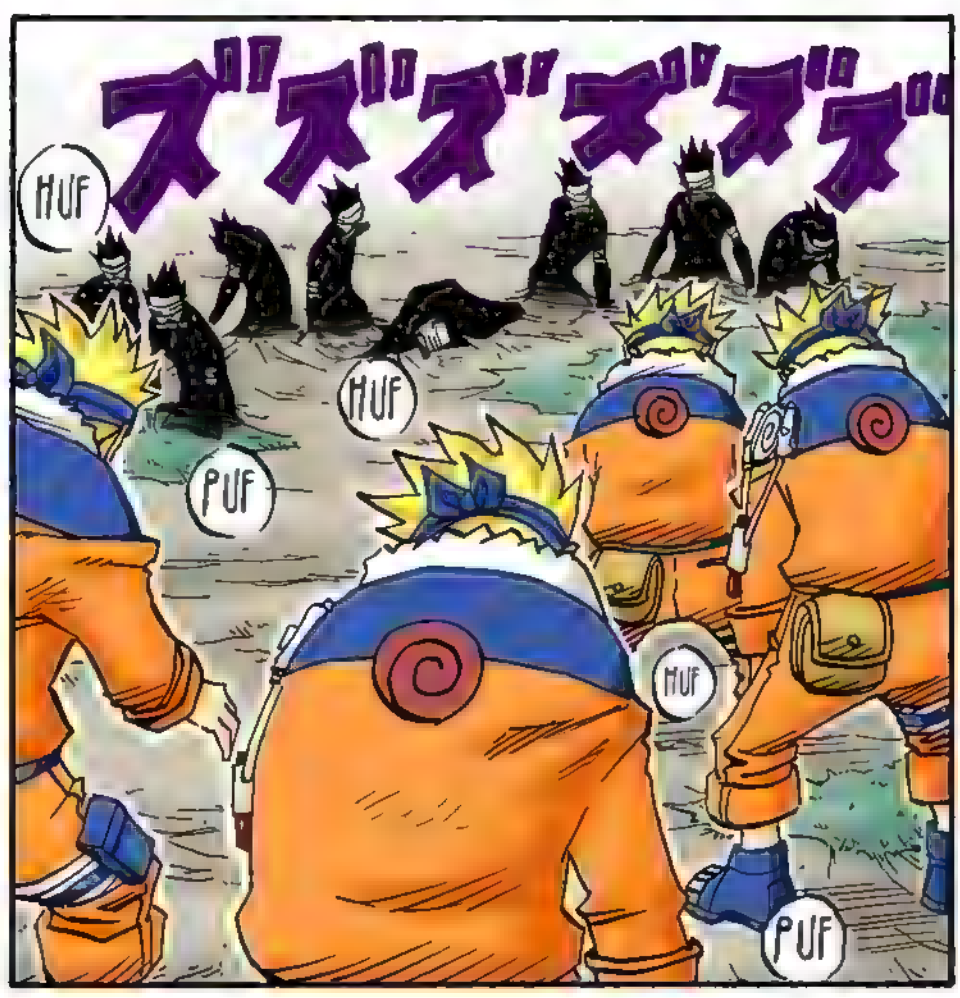
!!


HEH HEH HEH...
IT WOULD SEEM OUR BEST COURSE IS TO INCREASE OUR NUMBERS.

!!


RATS!!
.....!!

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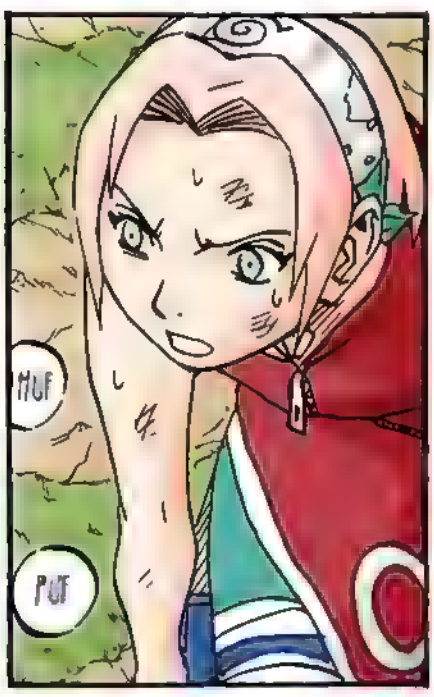
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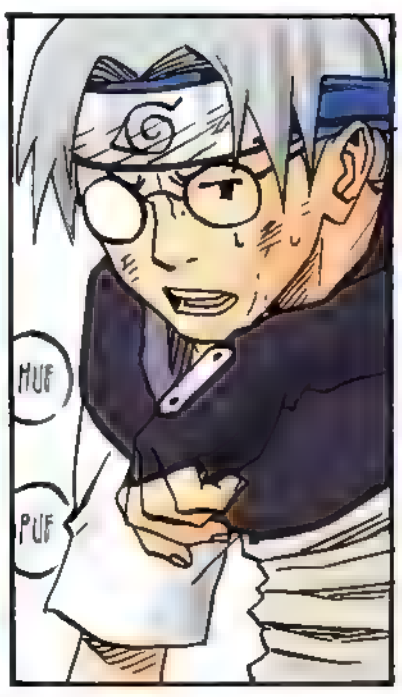
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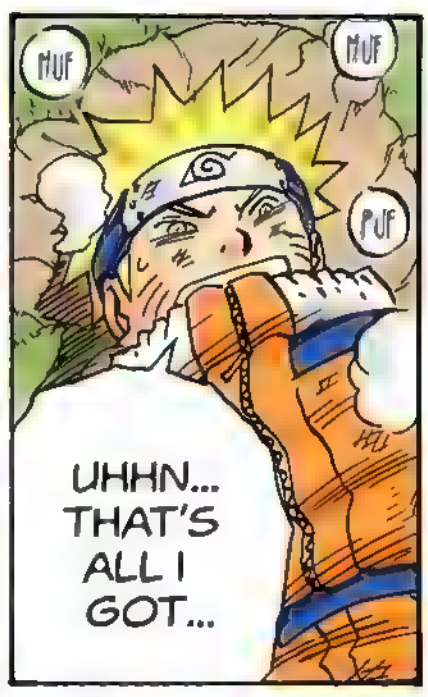

MUF
MUF
PUF
UHHN... THAT'S ALL I GOT...

スウ…
HEH HEH HEH... WE'VE BEEN HOUNDING THEIR PSYCHES ALL NIGHT!
ALL THAT REMAINS IS THEIR BODIES... EASY PREY.

HEH... I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH, MUBI...
IT WILL BE DAWN SOON... A GOOD TIME FOR A HUNT...

PUF

!!

PUF

PUF

PUF

!!!!

I'M SO GLAD THERE'S TIME FOR A LITTLE TASTE OF PAYBACK!

...MAKING US WORK HARD ALL NIGHT.

...YOU'RE THE ONE WHO MAIMED MY SHOULDER! AND HERE YOU ARE AGAIN...

I KNOW YOU...

PUF

PUF

PUF

PUF

!!?
NICE WORK, NARUTO!
NOW WHO'S THE TRAPPED RAT?
HEY GUYS... YOU'RE SHOWING YOUR TAILS... JUST LIKE THE DIRTY, DOUBLE-CROSSING DEMON-CRITTERS YOU ARE!
SUCKERS!!
WHEN...? HOW DID THEY...?!
WH-WHAT THE--?! N-NO WAY!

HAH!

PRETTY SLICK, EH? YOU WERE THINKING THE SHADOW DOPPELGANGERS WERE MY WHOLE ACT...BUT THEY WERE JUST A DISTRACTION...

...TO KEEP YOU FROM NOTICING I WAS SINGLE-HANDEDLY IMPERSONATING MY ENTIRE TEAM!!

ボン

ボン

NO... NO WAY! THAT LITTLE PUNK COULDN'T HAVE--!

!!

PUF

.....!!

HUF

HUF

ガッ...

...USING GENJUTSU TO BEAT YOU AT YOUR OWN GAME!

AND WHILE HE DID THAT, WE THREE SNEAKED UP BEHIND YOU...

!

EEP!

I'LL HANDLE THE REST.

YOU EXPENDED ALL YOUR CHAKRA, NARUTO.

AAUGH!!

!!

!!

!!

HUF

PUF

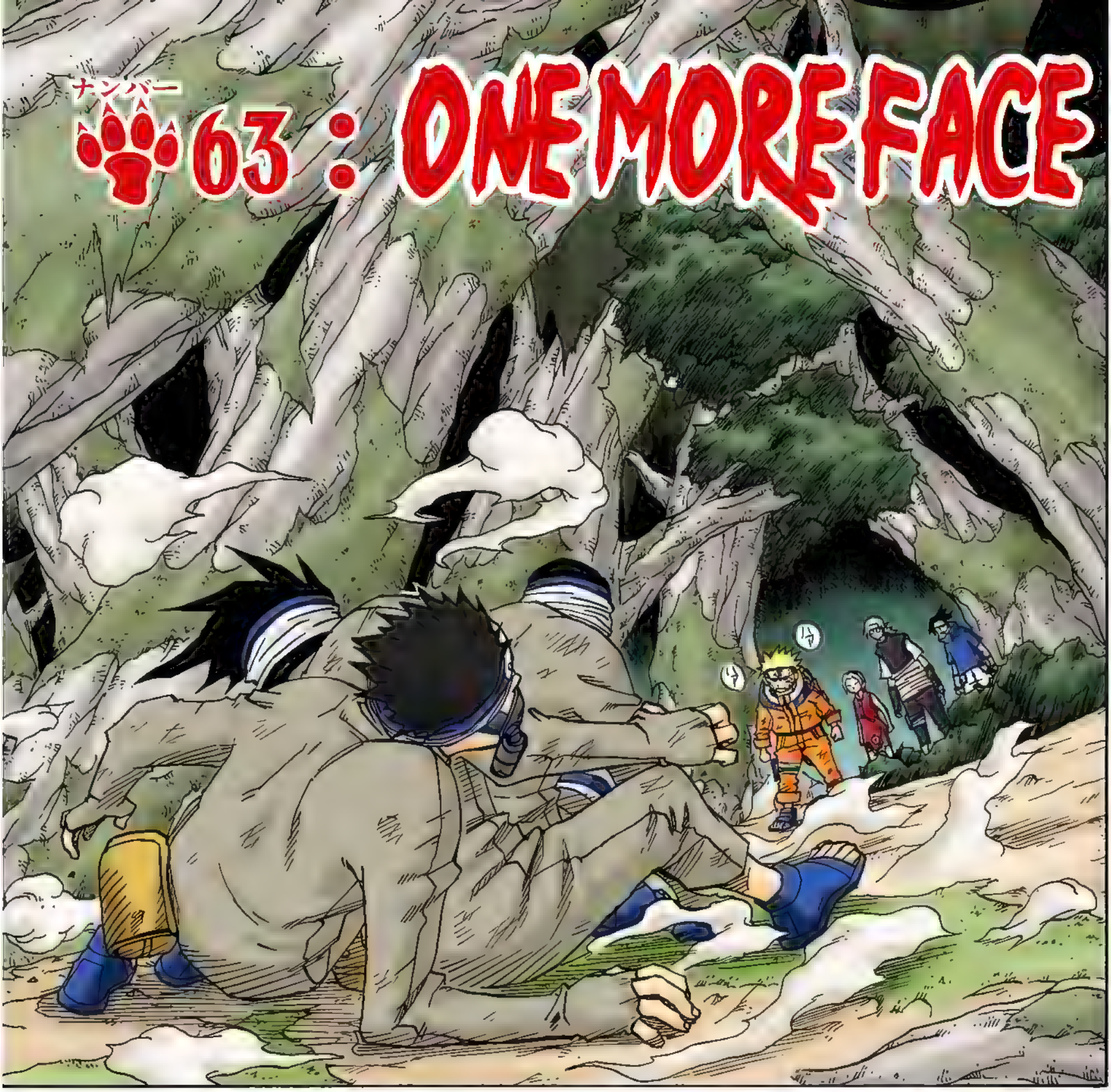
HUF

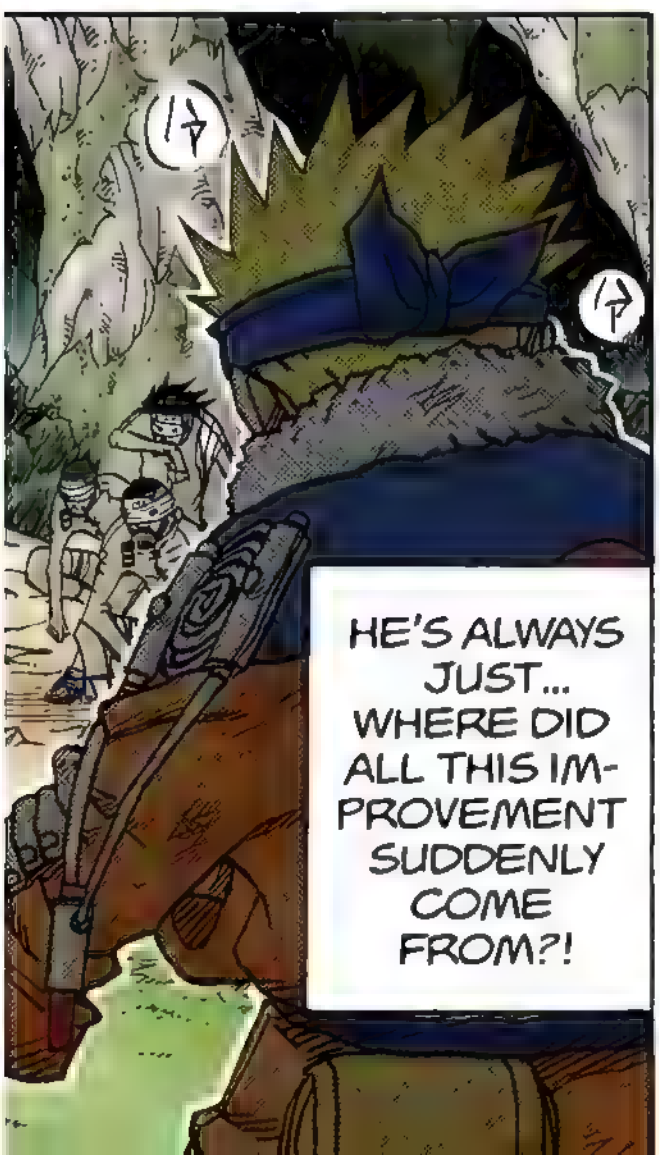
NO WAY! I WON'T STAND AROUND AND LET YOU HAVE ALL THE FUN!

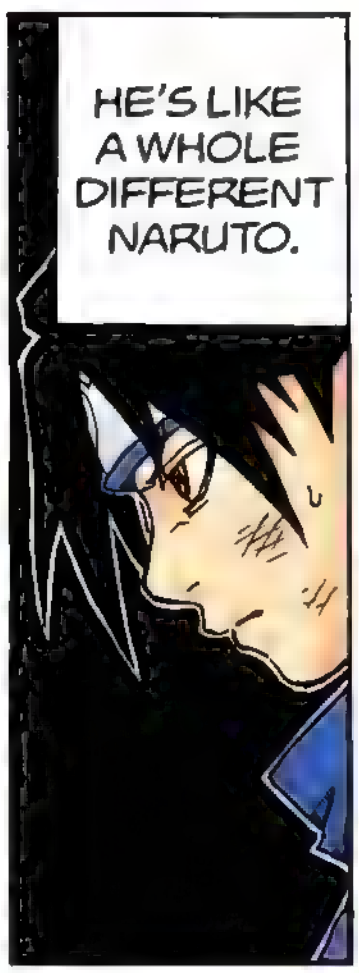
.....

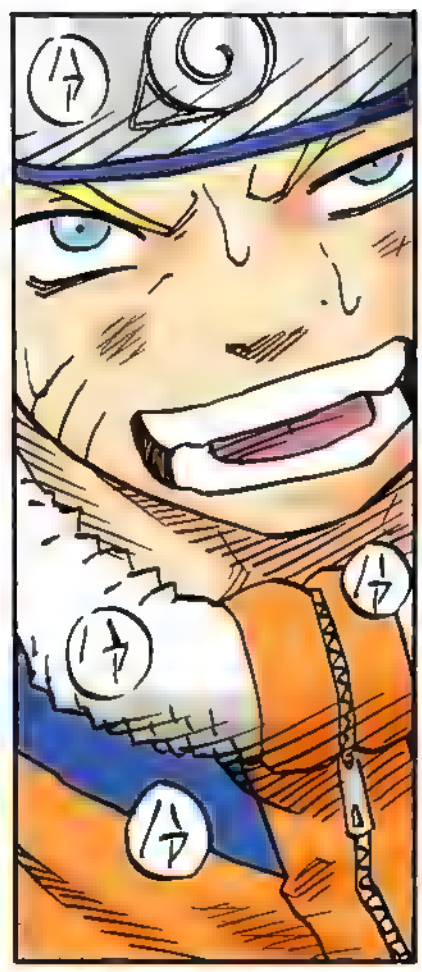
!

ナンバー 63：ONE MORE FACE









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!

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YET HE STILL HAS THE STAMINA TO BE ON HIS FEET AND MOVING... EVEN THOUGH IT'S THE MORNING OF THE FIFTH DAY!

CREATING ALL THOSE DOPPELGANGERS... AND THEN CAREFULLY TRANSFORMING JUST THREE CLONES INTO COUNTERFEITS OF HIS COMRADES... IT WAS MONUMENTAL!

HIS CHAKRA IS IMMENSE!

...NARUTO...

HE'S STILL A BOY... IF HE REALLY GAINS MASTERY OVER THAT MASSIVE CHAKRA...

...HE COULD BECOME A MONSTER!

SO WE'RE GOING TO DEMONSTRATE OUR OWN NINJA SKILLS!!

BUT WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF TIME!

HOWEVER, THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE COMPLETELY OUT OF LUCK!

YOU DO HAVE SOME SKILL...

スッ

スッ

ART OF THE DOPPELGANGER -- MIST TECHNIQUE!

!!!

I'LL JUST PLOW RIGHT THROUGH THEM UNTIL I GET TO THE REAL GUY!

THERE'S GOT TO BE MORE TO THEM THAN THIS... STAY ALERT!

NO... JUST ORDINARY DOPPEL-GANGERS... BUT...

...SHADOW DOPPEL-GANGERS...?

HAH! IF MOST OF THEM ARE ILLUSIONS... THEN THERE'S JUST ONE SOLID BODY.

!

WHO ASKED YOU?!!

THAT'S A TOTAL WASTE OF EFFORT, BONEHEAD!

.....

ドドド

CHAAARGE!!

...HAVE I EXPENDED ALL MY CHAKRA...?! BLAST IT...

OW... EVERY TIME I TRY TO USE THE SHARINGAN MIRROR EYE POWER, MY NECK ACHES...

ピキッ..

!

NARUTO! TAKE IT EASY!!

...WHOA!!

.....!!

GAAAH!!

RATS!! ANOTHER DOPPEL-GANGER!

!!

IS THIS ANOTHER ILLUSION?!

THEY'RE ALL FAKE!

NARUTO, STOP!

AND HIM!

AND ANO-THER...

SHARING AN!

THIS IS THE LAST OF MY CHAKRA...

ハニィィ

!

SASUKE?!

AUGHH!!

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!

SASUKE, DON'T USE THE SHARINGAN AGAIN!!

THAT MARK... IT'S SPREADING... LIKE BEFORE!

SHAME ON YOU, LETTING YOUR GUARD DOWN LIKE THAT.

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UHHN...

KABUTO...!

ガバッ!!

YAH

!!

DON'T BOTHER, NARUTO!

ALL RIGHT, YOU--!!

SO WHERE ARE THE REAL ATTACKS COMING FROM?!

BUT ILLUSIONS CAN'T PUNCH AND STAB, YOU KNOW!

IT'S A WASTE OF TIME. THERE ARE NO REAL BODIES AMONG THEM FOR YOU TO HIT.

THAT'S ALL THE SHADOW DOPPELGANGERS I'VE GOT IN ME FOR A WHILE... NONE LEFT...

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OWW!

THE MYSTERY IS THE ESSENCE OF THEIR ATTACK!!!

IF I KNEW THAT, WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH ANY OF THIS!!

!!

THEY SEEM TO HAVE REACHED THEIR LIMITS... HOW FORTUNATE!

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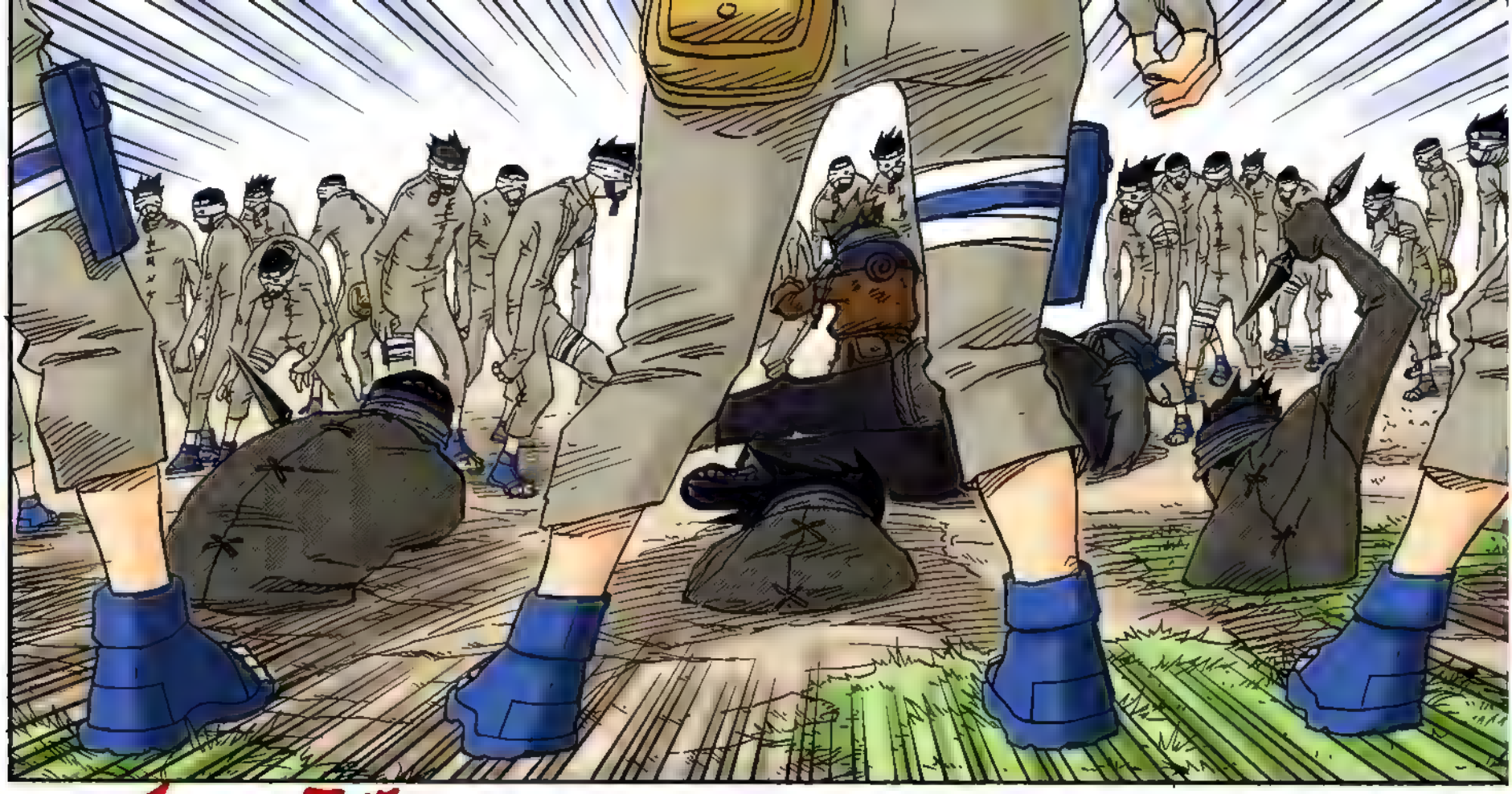

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THAT'S IT!! THEY HID THEIR PHYSICAL SELVES USING DOTON -- THE ART OF EARTH -- AND USED DOPPELGANGERS TO MASK THE REAL ATTACKS!!
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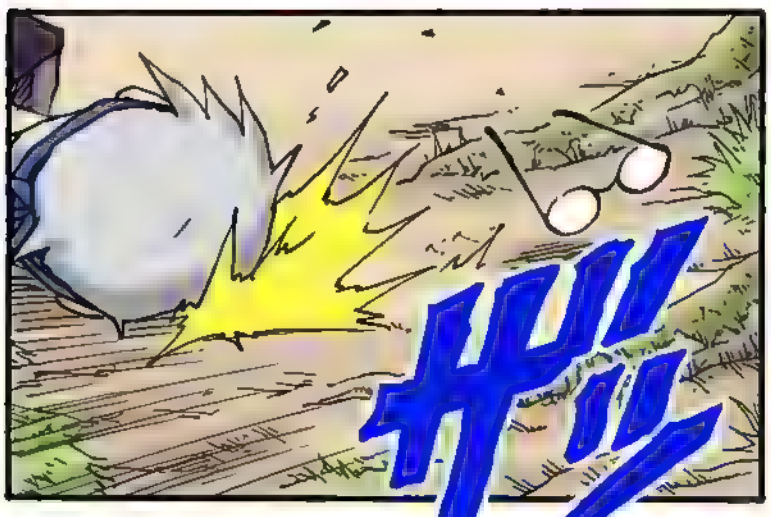
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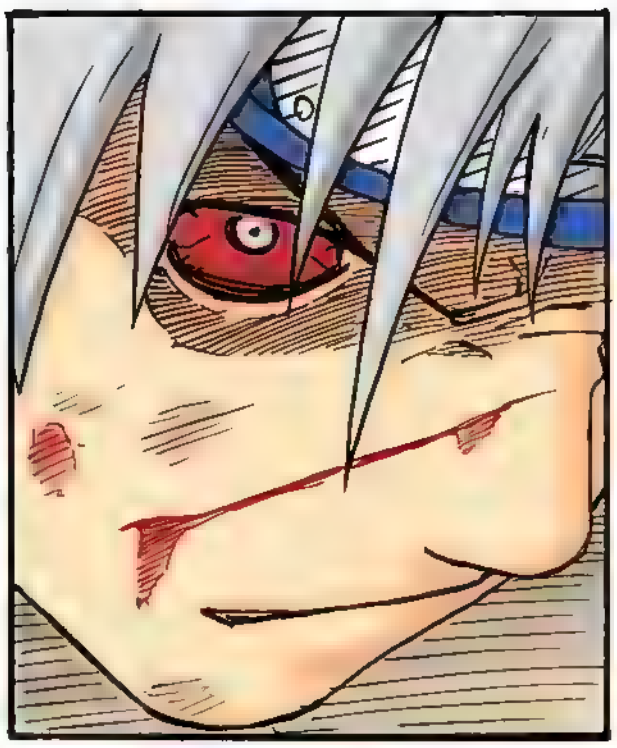

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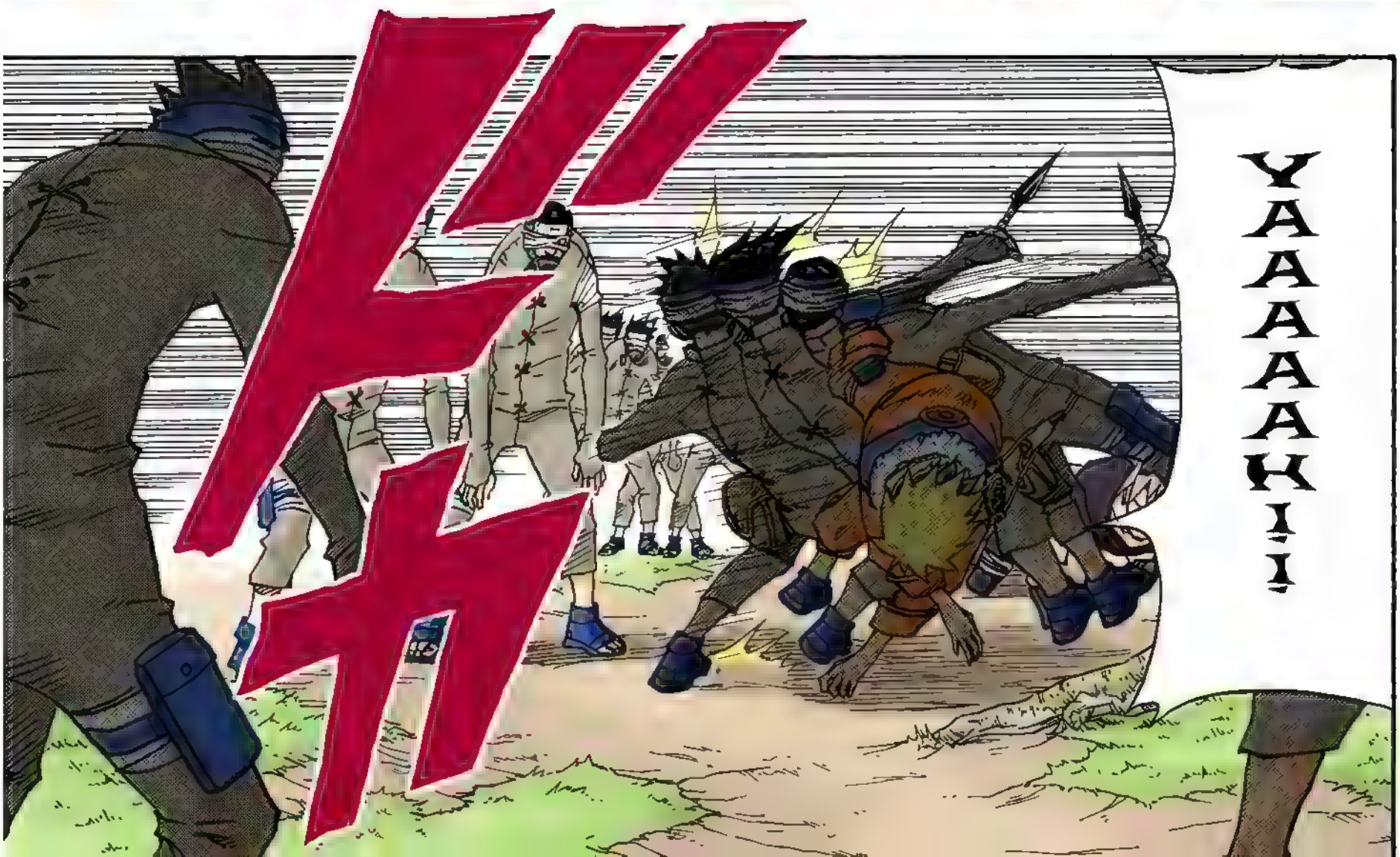
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YAAAAAKI!!

HHHH!!!

"SHAME ON YOU, LETTING YOUR GUARD DOWN LIKE THAT"... SUCKER!

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HAH!

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HEH HEH...

NARUTO, THAT WAS OUTSTANDING!!

PLOP

.....

THANKS FOR THE SAVE, NARUTO!

PHEW!

ARE YOU WOUNDED? THAT'S ONE MONSTER BRUISE!!

WHAT HAPPENED... TO YOUR NECK?!

!

...IT'S NOTHING...

ズッ

SOMETHING ABOUT THIS KABUTO JUST... BUGS ME!

GOOD WORK!

WE GOT US A HEAVEN SCROLL!!

HEY! OVER HERE!

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HUH? ...OH, IT'S YOU GUYS...

YOU'RE LATE, KABUTO!

THE WAY YOU CAME THROUGH IN THE END WAS AMAZING, NARUTO.

DON'T THANK ME. YOU EARNED THEM.

BUT IT'S ALL GOOD! THANKS TO YOU, OUR GROUP HAS A FULL SET OF SCROLLS, SAME AS YOU DO!

!

SORRY. I RAN INTO A LITTLE TROUBLE.

YEAH!

GOOD LUCK, EVERYONE. GIVE IT YOUR BEST!

THIS IS THE DOOR WE ENTER THROUGH.

.....

HEH...

THE SEAL ON THE DOOR SAYS "OPEN."

TAK

HE'S ALREADY EXCEEDED ALL PROJECTIONS, SIR...

WHAT WAS THE OUT-COME...?

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THE CHARACTER ON THE CARD SAYS "SHINOBI."

HEH HEH... IT ALMOST SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE A LITTLE BIT WORRIED...

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AND... HOW WAS HE?

I FIGURE YOU'LL NEED THIS.

I'VE KEPT A CAREFUL RECORD OF HIS PROGRESS THROUGHOUT THE SECOND EXAM.

...LORD OROCHIMARU.

NO... I'M JUST CURIOUS TO HEAR YOUR OPINION...

THAT'S NOT REALLY NECESSARY, IS IT...?

...BECAUSE, JUST LIKE ALWAYS, THE DECISION IS YOURS ALONE.

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...AS ONE OF MY SOUND NINJA SPIES.

GOOD WORK...

HEH... I DO SO ENJOY YOUR INTELLIGENCE.

...THERE'S NO ONE HERE...

INNER SAKURA

SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

キョロキョロ

DARN IT! THAT WAS OVER TOO SOON!!

OH! OKAY...

HM?

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I'M ALL RIGHT, SAKURA... YOU CAN LET GO.

IF QUALITIES OF HEAVEN ARE YOUR DESIRE TO ACQUIRE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE TO TAKE YOUR MIND HIGHER, IF EARTHLY QUALITIES ARE WHAT YOU LACK, TRAIN YOUR BODY IN THE FIELDS AND PREPARE TO ATTACK. WHEN BOTH HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE OPENED TOGETHER, THE PATH OF PERIL WILL REVERT TO THE RIGHTEOUS PATH FOREVER. THIS " " IS THE SECRET WAY... ... THAT GUIDES US ON FROM THIS PLACE TODAY

THE THIRD HOKAGE

HEY!

LOOK AT THAT!

I THINK IT REFERS TO THE SCROLLS...

I THINK MAYBE IT'S TELLING US TO OPEN BOTH THE HEAVEN AND EARTH SCROLLS, BUT...

AND WHAT'S WITH THE BLANK SPACE...?!

I DON'T GET IT ...!

IF... HEAVEN... YOUR DESIRE...

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PEEL

WELL... WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?!

PEEL